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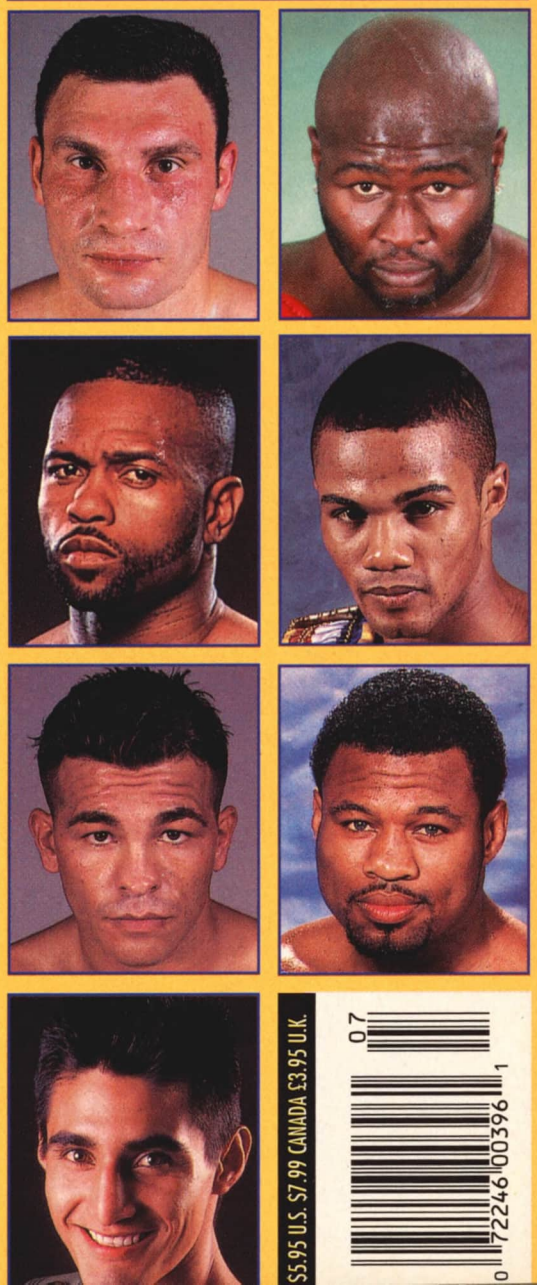

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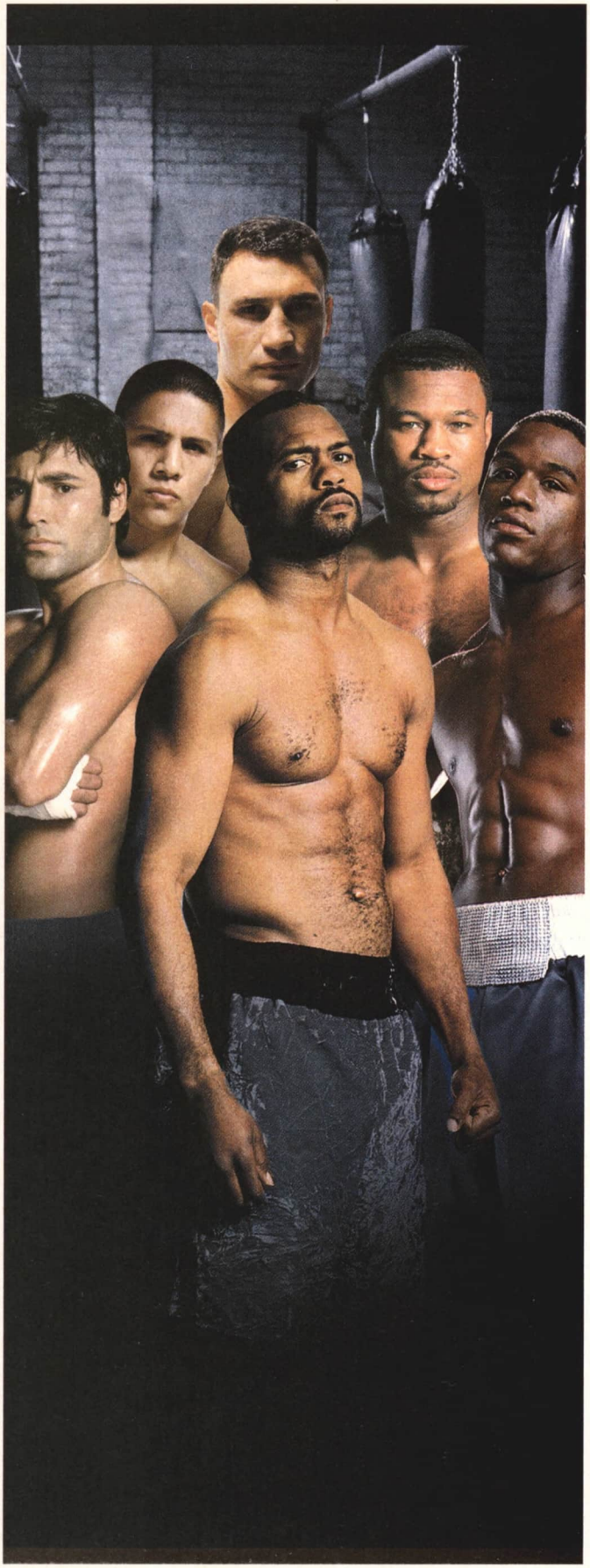

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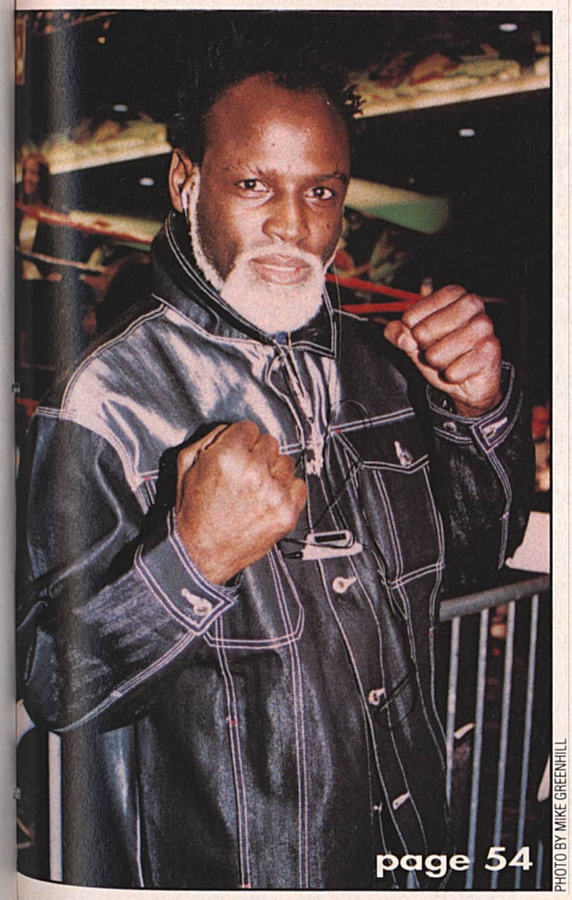

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

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RINGSIDE

When a reigning heavyweight champion like Lennox Lewis retires, there's usually a painful period of readjustment. It doesn't happen all that often, but when the most important participant in the Sweet Science quits on top, it seems to throw everything out of kilter. It's almost as if the boxing gods are angry that the old champ didn't go out on his shield.

It's at times like this that lesser talents frequently step into the spotlight, and, consequentially, the game suffers. It's been this way throughout boxing history, starting with Jim Jeffries, the first of five heavyweight champions to step down while still in office. Like Lewis, Jeffries had pretty much cleaned out the division before he retired in 1905, which was bound to make the transition all the more difficult.

Jeffries backed a match between Marvin Hart and Jack Root for his old belt, but the news of Hart's victory was met with a collective yawn. It wasn't much better when Tommy Burns beat Hart. Things finally picked up again, albeit for all the wrong reasons, when Jack Johnson thrashed Burns to become the first black heavyweight champion.

It was pretty much the same story when Gene Tunney abdicated in 1928. For a while afterward, there was a new heavyweight champion almost every year. Max Schmeling beat Jack Sharkey for the vacant title in 1930; Sharkey won the rematch in '32. Then came Primo Carnera in '33, Max Baer in '34, and Jim Braddock in '35. Finally, Joe Louis ascended to the throne in '37, and a new golden era was underway.

The same dynamic was at work when Louis retired in 1949. Ezzard Charles and Jersey Joe Walcott took turns holding the title, but it wasn't until Rocky Marciano knocked out Walcott in '52 that interest spiked again. When Marciano retired somewhat unexpectedly in '56, it created another vacuum, one that wasn't really satisfactorily filled until Muhammad Ali emerged in '64 and took the title to unprecedented heights.

But the bigger the star, the bigger the comedown, and when Ali bowed out '79, less than a year after regaining the title for the final time, it set the wheels in motion for perhaps the most dismal era in the history of the division. With the alphabet gangs sowing the seeds of discord, no less than 13 men held pieces of the title between October '79 and June '88, when Mike Tyson, who already held three alphabet belts, splattered Michael Spinks to claim the true linear title.

Due to today's seemingly mediocre field of hopefuls, I fear we're headed down the same old path again. As long as Lewis was around, nobody paid too much attention to the spurious claims of Chris Byrd (IBF) and John Ruiz (WBA), but with the enigmatic Englishman in retirement, things are bound to get muddier.

Naturally, THE RING will support any heavyweight who fills the vacancy in the manner prescribed in the policy printed on the ratings page of every issue *(see page 14)*. But don't expect the entire boxing industry to fall into line with this commonsense solution. There's too much money and power involved for that, and the last things many of the players want is what's good for the sport. Greed and self-interest dominate even more today than they did back when Jeffries hung up his gloves.

I'm not sure if it's the sport's inability to learn from the past, or just the low part of an unavoidable cycle. But it sure looks like history is getting ready to repeat itself yet again.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 83, No. 8 **July 2004**

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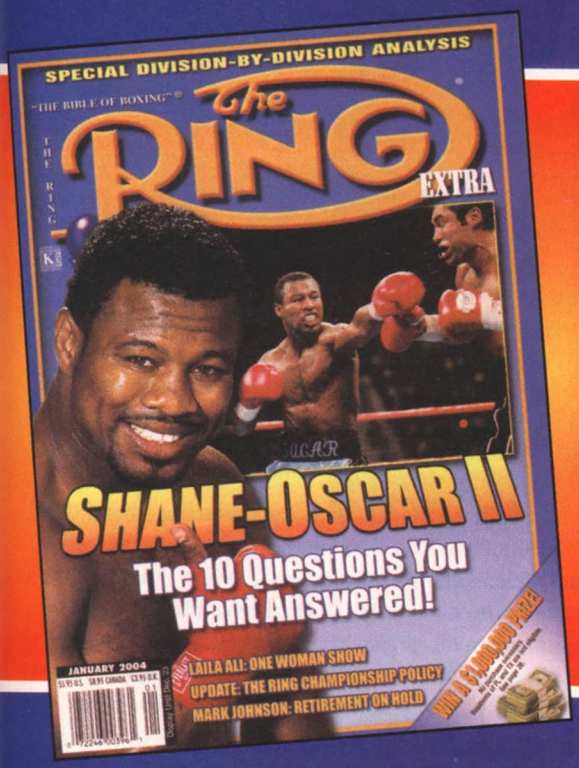

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ROUND ONE

TYSON'S STILL THE BOMB

Love him or hate him, it seems that boxing simply can't do without a regular dose of Mike Tyson. More than a decade removed from his fighting prime, he's still the focus of more mainstream media attention than any other boxer. And while Tyson's image doesn't appear on the cover of THE RING as regularly as it once did, we are no more immune to Tyson-itis than anybody else. This enduring interest in all things Tyson probably says more about us than it does about him. But why fight it? Instead, let's take a look at what Mr. Mike has been up to since the last issue hit the newsstands.

In late-February, Tyson pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in a case stemming from a brawl last June in the lobby of the Marriott hotel in Brooklyn. You remember: Tyson beat up autograph-seekers Nestor Alvarez-Ramos and Samuel Velez, who had turned nasty when Tyson rebuffed their request. Even prosecutor John P. O'Mara agreed that Tyson's action "was not an unprovoked attack." Therefore, a deal was cut for Tyson to remain in psychiatric counseling for six months and perform 100 hours of community service, instead of returning to jail.

PHOTO BY KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

Whitney and her "animal in bed"

Tyson will be spending those 100 hours at Gleason's Gym, where he will conduct after-school boxing lessons for kids aged eight to 16.

"It's also important he talk to them about the hard lessons he has learned over the years," Gleason's owner Bruce Silverglade told the New York *Daily News*. "I can't think of anyone who has gone through the highs and lows he has in his lifetime."

According to a recent article in England's *Sunday Mirror*, one of the recent highs has been Tyson's girlfriend, Luz Whitney. Among other things, Whitney revealed that, "the chemistry between us means our sex life is explosive. He's an animal in bed. He's so good, I call him 'The Bomb.'"

Whitney also said, "It makes me sad he still has this reputation as a mean, aggressive person. The real Mike is sensitive, funny, romantic, generous, and extremely loving."

Okay, so Mike's a nice guy and still The Man between the sheets, but what about his boxing career?

"He could sign a $10-million contract to fight tomorrow if he wanted," said Whitney.

Tyson's take on what's left of his career is slightly more pragmatic.

"I'm going to fight in Mexico in June," a bankrupt Tyson told *The New York Times* during a court recess. "I have to earn a living somehow to keep from starving to death. I'm just looking to pay my bills. I'm just going to grab $1-million, $2-million, $5-million fights now. No more marquee fights. I'm just barnstorming now."

Cus D'Amato would be disappointed with how things have turned out for his prize pupil, but somewhere Jack Johnson is nodding in empathy.

—Nigel Collins

FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR FOREMAN

Mention "Belfast Chicken" to George Foreman, and the ex-heavyweight champion of the world would probably guess it was something for his Lean, Mean, Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine. But, in fact, "The Belfast Chicken" was the ring nickname of Bill Clark, a famous 19th-century bare-knuckle fighter whose hundreds of London Prize Ring bouts included contests against Jem Mace, Nat Langham, and Tom Sayers. On November 17, 1907, Clark caused a big media stir by announcing from his home in St. Louis, Missouri, when he superintended a public natatorium, that "I believe I have one more good fight left, and I'll meet any of them with bare fists or padded mitts." Old Bill was 82 at the time.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Foreman throws in the towel on broadcasting—but not necessarily fighting

A comparative spring chicken at 55, multimillionaire Foreman announced in early-February that he intended to come back for one more fight of his own.

An undisputed genius at self-promotion, Big George knows how to keep his name before the public, whether hawking cooking machines, his own clothing line, or even a CD of "inspirational messages of faith." You'd think he'd be too busy to think about putting on the gloves again. Or too smart.

At least as smart as The Belfast Chicken. When Clark announced his plan to fight again, he had the sense and public relations savvy to stipulate his willingness to meet "any 80-year-old man in the world at catchweights." No young meat for him.

That's a recipe Big George should keep in mind.

—Pete Ehrmann

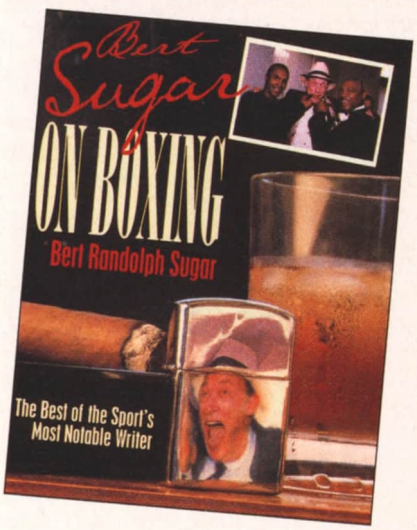
THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

In the introduction to his new book, *Bert Sugar On Boxing* (The Lyons Press, 289 pages, hardcover, $22.95), the author laments that he was never in the class of his two idols, Red Smith and Jim Murray, but to folks who began watching boxing in the 1970s and '80s, the acid-penned Sugar is every bit as important as the two men who inspired him.

The book is part of a series that includes Ernest Hemingway on fishing, so Sugar's in good company, especially since his career as a journalist was sometimes at odds with his desire to be a "character." After all, this is the guy who, after picking Michael Spinks to beat Mike Tyson, appeared at the post-fight press conference wearing a sign that read "I was wrong." Sugar also wasn't averse to jumping ship to work on projects such as *The Complete Idiot's Guide To Pro Wrestling*. Still, his list of boxing credits is longer than Sonny Liston's jab, and anyone taking a trip through the sport's hardscrabble past couldn't ask for a better guide.

Many of the pieces here are taken from what is perhaps Sugar's finest hour, a splendid coffee table book called *The Great Fights*, and the best piece is the lengthy chapter on John L. Sullivan. Sugar's more recent writing is less inspired, relying too heavily on bad puns and sarcasm rather than the sinewy storytelling of his writing prime.

It's not a perfect collection—a decade-by-decade look at the sport might have been a better idea—but it will serve any new fan wanting to get acquainted with the man *The Boston Globe* calls "one of sport's greatest living historians."



—Don Stradley

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2-13-04	Clarence Vinson KO 2 Roberto Chacon	ESPN2	jf	C+	C-	C+
Is it us or does Vinson always look one punch away from getting stopped?						
2-13-04	Brian Viloria W 12 Juan Keb-Baas	ESPN2	fl	B-	B-	C+
Viloria has to get a little lucky to be exciting; he didn't get lucky here, but did a solid job anyway						
2-13-04	Jose Luis Castillo KO 2 Derrick Parks	Telef	w	B-	F	C
What a mismatch; we expect better from Telefutura, who never used to put guys in so easy						
2-20-04	Willie Gibbs KO 9 Glen Rayburn	ESPN2	m	C	C	C+
Gibbs probably loses to Jermain Taylor, but good for him anyway for calling Taylor out						
2-20-04	Tokunbo Olajide KO 2 Larry Marks	ESPN2	jm	B-	B-	B-
Why is everyone so surprised when a guy who just got a concussion does something wacky?						
2-26-04	Stephen Foster KO 6 Sean Hughes	Show	f	D+	B-	C+
Was it really necessary to go all the way to England for this?						
2-26-04	Daniel Ponce-DeLeon KO 6 Cesar Figueroa	HBO L	f	C+	B+	C+
DeLeon looks awfully beatable, but there is something a little Cuevas-esque about him, isn't there?						
2-26-04	Joan Guzman KO 7 Agapito Sanchez	HBO L	jf	B+	B+	B-
Guzman becoming one of the game's most dependable punchers; Sanchez not an easy guy to stop						
2-27-04	Cesar Bazan W Disq. 2 Roberto Ortega	Telef	jw	C+	D-	D-
Another in a string of awful main events; when did Bob Yalen move over to Telefutura?						
2-27-04	Juan Ruiz W 12 Cristobal Cruz	ESPN2	f	C	C	C+
If we saw Ruiz when he wasn't punching we wouldn't recognize him						
2-28-04	Miguel Cotto KO 4 Victoriano Sosa	HBO	jw	B	C+	B-
All right, we get it: When it comes to destroying lightweights, no 153-pound junior welterweight can do it like Cotto can						
2-28-04	**Erik Morales W 12 Jesus Chavez**	**HBO**	**WBC f**	**A**	**A**	**A-**
Look at it this way: If Chavez has two good arms, he gives Morales more openings; either way, an exquisite war						
3-5-04	Carlos Quintana KO 3 Edwin Cassiani	ESPN2	w	C+	B-	C
Cassiani remind anyone else of Maurice Blocker?						
3-5-04	Allen Green KO 3 Laverne Clark	ESPN2	lh	C-	D	C-
It's hard not to root for a guy named Laverne						
3-5-04	Verno Phillips KO 1 Julio Garcia	ESPN2	jm	B+	B+	B
Streaking Phillips one of the hottest fighters in the business; how about a rematch with Kassim Ouma?						
3-5-04	Cuauhtemoc Vargas W 8 Francisco Tejedor	Telef	jf	C-	C	C
That makes nine losses in a row for Tejedor, who is becoming the Justin Juuko of the bantamweights						
3-5-04	Frankie Archuleta W 10 Johnny Tapia	Telef	f	B	C+	B-
Team Tapia taking the art of excuse-making to another level; what's next, he had Legionnaires' Disease?						
3-6-04	Mark Johnson KO 4 Luis Bolano	Show	jb	A-	B+	B
So do you think we all were a little hasty calling Johnson shot?						
3-6-04	Diego Corrales W 12 Joel Casamayor	Show	jl	A	A	B+
No one who can punch like Corrales should spend the last half of any fight retreating; rubber match anyone?						

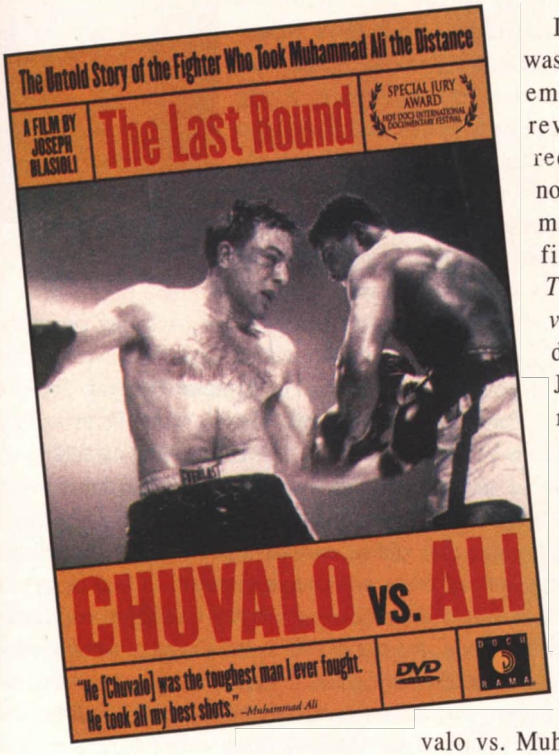
Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

ANOTHER GEORGE MAKES A COMEBACK



If *Against The Ropes* wasn't your idea of great cinema—and based on the reviews and box office receipts, it was virtually nobody's idea of great cinema—your faith in boxing films may be restored by *The Last Round: Chuvalo vs. Ali*, an exceptional documentary directed by Joseph Blasioli that was released on DVD in March. They say that Chuck Wepner was the inspiration for Rocky Balboa, but you could be forgiven after viewing *The Last Round* for thinking Balboa vs. Apollo Creed was based on George Chuvalo vs. Muhammad Ali. As difficult as it is to equal Hollywood drama in the documentary format, Blasioli's film is downright *Rocky*-esque at times—only instead of a love story on the side, you get a history lesson.

The narrator tells us that "every fight is the intersection of two different stories," but there are really three stories unfurled here: Chuvalo's, Ali's, and that of the mid-'60s and its political turbulence. The most emphasis is given to the tale of Chuvalo, the Canadian journeyman/contender who would become the first of only two men to take the pre-exile Ali the 15-round distance. From hearing Chuvalo recall how seeing a copy of THE RING at age seven made him first think about becoming a boxer, to him insisting that the Ali fight left him with an inaccurate reputation as a minimally skilled tough guy, there's much to learn about the likeable challenger. And the older footage of Chuvalo is revealing and surprisingly plentiful, including material from his fights, press conferences, training, travels, and a memorable scene with his wife in the dressing room following his fight with Floyd Patterson.

Also noteworthy are the details of the first of many despicable WBA stripjobs, plus a glimpse of a young Bob Arum, looking like a dead ringer for actor John Turturro.

As journalist Robert Lipsyte points out during the final fight scenes, Chuvalo was the first to make Ali prove how much punishment he could take. But *The Last Round*, a film on par with the excellent boxing documentaries produced by HBO in recent years, really isn't about the grueling fight between the title characters or its final round. As in the original *Rocky*, the final few minutes may be devoted to the fight, but the real story lies in everything that led up to it.

For ordering information, go to www.newvideo.com or call 1-800-314-8822.

—Eric Raskin

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Frazier: May face domestic abuse charges

Did former heavyweight champ **Joe Frazier** strike his girlfriend? In mid-February, Philadelphia police were called when Frazier allegedly hit **Sherry Gibson**, the mother of Frazier's 12-year-old son **Derek**, but a few days later, Gibson said "Smokin' Joe" never hit her. Police said it would be up to the district attorney's office to decide whether the case would proceed … Great news for another former Philly fighter: **Anthony Fletcher**, 48, who has spent the last 11 years on death row, saw his first-degree murder conviction overturned in late-February due to new evidence presented in a testimony by the medical examiner. Fletcher will now either be given a new trial or released. Fletcher's story was detailed in the August 2000 issue of THE RING … Former IBF President **Bob Lee**, meanwhile, is finally headed to jail. Lee's 22-month prison sentence for racketeering and money laundering was upheld by a federal appeals court in mid-February … Two new developments in the saga of former lightweight titlist **Paul Spadafora**: First, in late-February, Spadafora and **Nadine Russo**, the woman he allegedly shot last October, applied for a marriage license; and days later, the New York State Athletic Commission indicated it would not license the troubled Spadafora to fight in the state, ruining a proposed May meeting with **Floyd Mayweather** … Welterweight **Teddy Reid** filed suit against middleweight **William Joppy** in late-February, alleging that at the end of a sparring session, Joppy struck Reid with a spit bucket and then a pair of two-pound weights … ESPN boxing underwent two major personnel changes in February. First, *Friday Night Fights* studio co-host **Max Kellerman** failed to renew his contract (and later in the month signed on with Fox SportsNet), and a few weeks later, **Bob Yalen**, the program manager for boxing since 1995, resigned … New Orleans-based **Les Bonano** announced his retirement from boxing promotion in late-February after taking a job with the Louisiana State Attorney General's Office … Irish junior welterweight contender **Eamonn Magee** suffered a broken leg in an attack by a gang of men in early-March, and announced his retirement days later. The 32-year-old Magee finished with a record of 25-4 (16) … In mid-February, onetime junior middleweight title challenger **Michael Rask**, 34, retired with a record of 30-3 (11). … Two ring deaths to report this issue, including yet another one in Indonesia, where lightweight **Jack Ryan** died five days after being kayoed in the seventh round by **Syamsul Hidayat**. The other tragedy occurred in Coconut Creek, Florida, where Peruvian lightweight **Luis Villalta**, 34, died four days after passing out following a 12-round decision loss to **Ricky Quiles** … Philadelphia welterweight **Tybius Flowers**, 30, was shot and killed in early-March. Insiders suspect that murder may have been related to a criminal investigation that Flowers was cooperating with … Trainer and former junior welter title challenger **Fitzroy Giusseppi** of Trinidad died suddenly of a stroke at age 53 in late-February while working the corner of an amateur fighter … Ending on an upbeat note, two photographers who make frequent contributions to THE RING were honored recently. **Tom Casino**, along with ex-fighters **Mike McCallum** and **Earnie Shavers**, was honored at a charity event to benefit Acorns Hospice in Birmingham, England. And former RING staffer **Al Bello**, now working for Getty Images, won second prize in the Sports Action Singles category in the 2003 World Press Photos of the Year awards for his tremendous shot from the **Dominick Guinn-Michael Grant** fight.

Kellerman: Left ESPN for Fox SportsNet

THE PUNCHLINES

"I look at myself when I'm 140, and I look fat."

—Three-division titlist Erik Morales, indicating that he doesn't think he'll move up in weight too many more times

"My first instinct is to make George about a 7-5 favorite over Max Schmeling."

—HBO analyst Larry Merchant, on former broadcast mate George Foreman's rumored comeback

AL KRATZER'S VIEW

"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended March 10, 2004)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **ROY JONES**
   Heavyweight/Light Heavyweight
2. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
   Junior Middleweight
4. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Junior Middleweight
5. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Lightweight
6. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Featherweight
7. **ERIK MORALES**
   Junior Lightweight
8. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **JAMES TONEY**
   Heavyweight
10. **ANTONIO TARVER**
    Light Heavyweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Mike Tyson, who hasn't fought since February 22, 2003, and had no fights scheduled as of press time, is removed for inactivity. Replacing him in the 10th position is fellow former champion Hasim Rahman.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: On the heels of his sensational first-round blastout of Julio Garcia, streaking Verno Phillips advances from seventh to fifth, landing directly below the last man to defeat him, fourth-ranked Kassim Ouma. Phillips' rise bumps Javier Castillejo down from fifth to sixth and Daniel Santos down from sixth to seventh.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: After being wiped out in four rounds by the much larger Miguel Cotto at junior welterweight, Victoriano Sosa—who in all likelihood will return to lightweight—slips a notch from ninth to 10th. Alex Trujillo climbs from number 10 to number nine as a result.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: There's been a significant shakeup in the top five at 130 pounds due to two important results. Diego Corrales (fifth last issue) grabs the top spot after decisioning Joel Casamayor (first last issue), who slides only one position, to number two, following the competitive loss. And by defeating Jesus Chavez (second last issue), Erik Morales (fourth last issue) moves ahead of Chavez to number three, with "El Matador" right below him in the fourth spot. Due to all the action around him, momentarily idle Carlos Hernandez falls from third to fifth.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Following his upset loss to unranked Frankie Archuleta, Johnny Tapia (fifth last issue) exits the rankings. Everybody below moves up a spot, and unbeaten Zahir Raheem returns at number 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Powerpunching Joan Guzman zooms up from sixth to third on the strength of his dominant knockout victory over the highly respected Agapito Sanchez. Jose Luis Valbuena (third last issue), Israel Vazquez (fourth last issue), and Salim Medjkoune (fifth last issue) all descend one spot to accommodate Guzman's rise.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Inactive since February 15, 2003, Tim Austin (third last issue) is removed, allowing everybody below him to advance one spot and making room for Mauricio Martinez at number 10. Toshiaki Nishioka, however, does not advance; he remains at number six following a decision loss to second rated Veerapol Sahaprom, while Genaro Garcia passes him, climbing from seventh last issue to fifth.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Mark Johnson (third last issue) moves up to second following his spectacular kayo of previously unbeaten Luis Bolano, forcing Alexander Munoz down from second to third. Bolano (ninth last issue) exits after the one-sided loss, allowing Jose Navarro to advance from 10th to ninth, while Katsushige Kawashima of Japan enters at number 10.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Although his performance against Jesus Chavez was far from flawless, Erik Morales (eighth last issue) nevertheless climbs to seventh, trading places with the inactive Kostya Tszyu. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended March 10, 2004

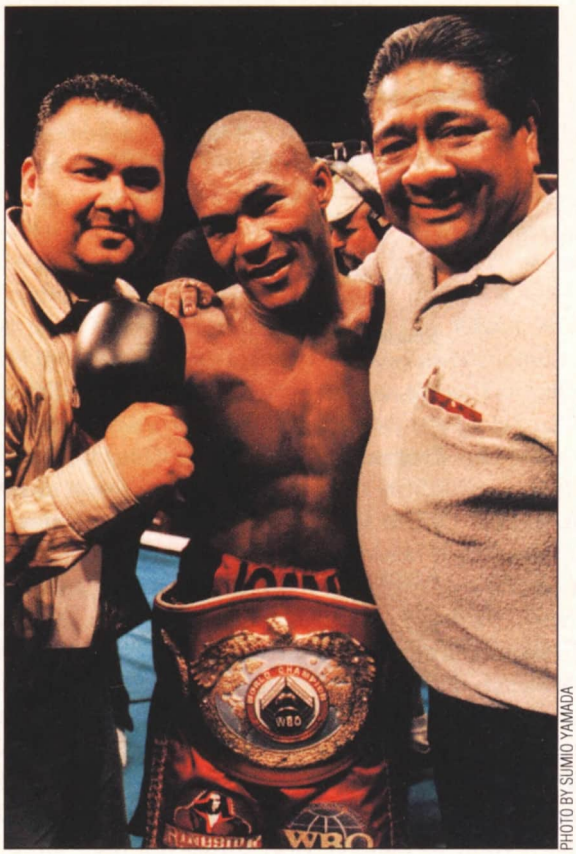


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Joan Guzman jumped three spots at junior feather after crushing Agapito Sanchez

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 33-2 (32)
2. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 37-2 (20)
3. **CORRIE SANDERS** South Africa 39-2 (29)
4. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)
5. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 67-4-2 (43)
6. **DAVID TUA** New Zealand 42-3-1 (37)
7. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 39-5-1 (27)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 42-2 (39)
9. **FRES OQUENDO** Puerto Rico 24-2 (15)
10. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 35-5-1 (29)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: SHANE MOSLEY Pomona, CA 39-2 (35)

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 36-3 (29)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT** St. Petersburg, FL 46-3 (25)
3. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 24-2 (22)
4. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 19-1-1 (13)
5. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 37-9-1 (19)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 56-5 (38)
7. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 27-2-1 (20)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 23-0 (18)
9. **J.C. CANDELO** Colombia 27-6-3 (19)
10. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 46-5 (30)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO Philippines 38-2-1 (29)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 42-2 (33)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico 57-4 (40)
3. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 21-2-1 (11)
4. **MANUEL MEDINA** Mexico 62-14 (28)
5. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL 39-6-1 (24)
6. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 27-2-1 (16)
7. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 35-1-1 (23)
8. **WILLIAM ABELYAN** Glendale, CA 23-4-1 (12)
9. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 19-0 (14)
10. **ZAHIR RAHEEM** Tulsa, OK 24-0 (14)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA Ft. Worth, TX 35-2 (12)

1. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 51-3-1 (35)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 24-2-2 (15)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 21-0 (17)
4. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela 23-2-1 (13)
5. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 35-3 (26)
6. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE** France 43-4-1 (21)
7. **OSAMU SATO** Japan 27-2-3 (16)
8. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 35-1-1 (19)
9. **NEDAL HUSSEIN** Australia 32-1 (19)
10. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico 24-5-4 (16)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 31-3 (28)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 42-1-2 (29)
3. **CRUZ CARBAJAL** Mexico 24-11-1 (20)
4. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark 54-2 (26)
5. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 30-4 (18)
6. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA** Japan 23-4-3 (14)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 15-0 (14)
8. **HERIBERTO RUIZ** Mexico 28-2-2 (13)
9. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 36-9-3 (11)
10. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama 23-5-1 (16)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VASSILIY JIROV**
   Kazakhstan 33-1 (29)
2. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 20-0 (17)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 29-2 (21)
4. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 43-12-2 (28)
5. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 22-1-1 (21)
6. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 26-5 (24)
7. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 32-6 (24)
8. **SEBASTIAN ROTHMAN**
   South Africa 17-2-2 (12)
9. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 49-4 (23)
10. **DALE BROWN**
    Canada 30-3-1 (20)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 21-2 (17)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 19-0 (13)
3. **GLENCOFFE JOHNSON**
   Miami, FL 40-9-2 (27)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 35-2 (22)
5. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 48-1 (38)
6. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA 21-3-1 (7)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 35-3-1 (21)
8. **SILVIO BRANCO**
   Italy 49-6-2 (30)
9. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
   Chicago, IL 44-4 (29)
10. **RICHARD HALL**
    Winter Haven, FL 27-4 (25)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 37-0 (30)
2. **SVEN OTTKE**
   Germany 33-0 (6)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 20-1 (15)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 29-5-1 (26)
5. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 17-1 (17)
6. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 25-3-1 (18)
7. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 29-1 (11)
8. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 40-9 (28)
9. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 45-2 (37)
10. **ROBIN REID**
    England 36-4-1 (27)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 43-2-1 (31)

1. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 39-1 (35)
2. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 36-4 (27)
3. **RODNEY JONES**
   Lafayette, LA 31-3 (20)
4. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 34-3-1 (25)
5. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN**
   Russia 19-4 (13)
6. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Little Rock, AR 19-0 (14)
7. **EVANS OURE ASHIRA**
   Denmark 23-0 (13)
8. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 20-0 (9)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
   Canada 18-1 (10)
10. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
    Netherlands 32-2 (14)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CORY SPINKS
St. Louis, MO 32-2 (11)

1. **RICARDO MAYORGA**
   Nicaragua 25-4-1 (22)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 30-3 (21)
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 35-2 (26)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 34-0 (26)
5. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 40-2 (25)
6. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 25-10 (18)
7. **TEDDY REID**
   Adelphi, MD 22-5-1 (16)
8. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
   England 23-1-1 (13)
9. **JOSE RIVERA**
   Worcester, MA 37-3-1 (24)
10. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
    Argentina 39-9-6 (11)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 30-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 53-3 (30)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 30-1 (22)
3. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 37-6 (28)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 23-1-1 (16)
5. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 34-0 (25)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 28-2-1 (16)
7. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 34-1 (10)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   Australia 37-6-1 (23)
9. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 19-0 (16)
10. **JUNIOR WITTER**
    England 27-1-2 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 31-0 (21)

1. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 33-2-1 (25)
2. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 49-6-1 (45)
3. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 35-3-1 (17)
4. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 35-0 (31)
5. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
   Mexico 47-10-2 (34)
6. **COURTNEY BURTON**
   Benton Harbor, MI 20-1 (11)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 36-1 (22)
8. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France 56-3-2 (41)
9. **ALEX TRUJILLO**
   Puerto Rico 23-1 (17)
10. **VICTORIANO SOSA**
    Dominican Republic 37-4-2 (27)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 38-2 (31)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 30-2 (19)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico 46-1 (34)
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 40-3 (28)
5. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 40-3-1 (24)
6. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 23-2 (6)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 42-2-1 (35)
8. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 40-2-1 (29)
9. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
   Mexico 19-8-1 (12)
10. **MIKE ANCHONDO**
    Los Angeles, CA 23-0 (18)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 30-2-1 (8)
2. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 43-3 (28)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 25-0 (24)
4. **LUIS PEREZ**
   Nicaragua 22-1 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 27-1-1 (21)
6. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 25-1 (15)
7. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-5-1 (11)
8. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 30-4-1 (20)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
   Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (7)
10. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
    Japan 25-3 (17)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 50-2 (26)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
   Venezuela 22-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 28-0 (21)
4. **ERIC MOREL**
   Madison, WI 33-1 (18)
5. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 28-4-2 (17)
6. **MALCOLM TUNACAO**
   Philippines 14-1-2 (10)
7. **PETER CULSHAW**
   England 23-1-1 (12)
8. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 16-0-2 (10)
9. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 20-0 (15)
10. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
    France 14-0 (6)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: ROSENDO ALVAREZ
Nicaragua 32-2-2 (21)

1. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 35-3-1 (26)
2. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 29-2 (23)
3. **VICTOR BURGOS**
   Mexico 36-13-3 (21)
4. **PICHIT SRIWAT**
   Thailand 28-2 (13)
5. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 19-2-2 (11)
6. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico 66-9-4 (30)
7. **MHIKIZA MYEKENI**
   South Africa 17-1 (6)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 35-2 (21)
9. **YOSAM CHOI**
   South Korea 25-3 (14)
10. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
    Thailand 50-3-2 (20)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 20-2-1 (10)
2. **EAGLE AKAKURA**
   Japan 12-0 (5)
3. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 33-1-1 (28)
4. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 30-2-1 (19)
5. **YUTAKA NIDA**
   Japan 15-1-3 (8)
6. **JUAN LANDAETA**
   Venezuela 15-2 (13)
7. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 50-2-2 (17)
8. **KEITARO HOSHINO**
   Japan 23-10 (6)
9. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 22-2-1 (19)
10. **IVAN CALDERON**
    Puerto Rico 18-0 (3)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

PREMATURE LIFTOFF

After months of rumor, speculation, and inside information that proved to be as far outside as it gets, heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis has ended the mystery and officially announced his retirement after 14 years in the ring and 44 bouts. At this special moment in boxing history, please allow me to convey my heartfelt sentiment to our departing warrior, the king of the big men and owner of the most prestigious title in professional sports. Hey, Lennox, this raspberry's for you!

(Now, imagine the sound of a meteor striking a warehouse full of whoopee cushions.)

"If you can't stand 110 percent on something and have the same kind of drive and hunger that you had in the beginning, you shouldn't step back in the ring," Lewis said in explaining his decision. "A lot of people that don't have the hunger step back in the ring for money. I wanted to be different. I wanted to go out on top and I wanted to do it on my terms."

Oh, Lewis did it on his terms, all right. Coming into his last title defense out of shape, winning on a cut that he opened with a glancing blow while trailing on the scorecards, bad-mouthing the opponent who fought better than anyone expected that evening, going along with plans for a rematch, scrapping the return bout, leaving the top of the heavyweight division in a holding pattern while contemplating his future, and then finally walking into the sunset. What an inspiration to all of us.

PHOTO BY NICOLAS ASFOURI/GETTY IMAGES

Lewis' retirement pleased his mother, Violet, but not Ryan

The truth is, Lennox, you shouldn't have put the mouthpiece and jump rope in mothballs until facing that tormentor of yours, Vitali Klitschko, one more time. You owed it to him. And you owed it to yourself. And to us. And to boxing.

Sure, my columns are continually urging aging fighters to pack it in, especially guys who are 38 years old and clearly on the decline. But this is a different case. Lewis, as bad as he may have looked against Klitschko, hadn't been taking horrible beatings or showing signs of neurological

damage, and thus wasn't likely to get seriously hurt no matter what happened in a Klitschko rematch. One more fight wasn't going to ruin him for life.

What it would have done, though, was leave no unfinished business, give Klitschko the opportunity that his unexpectedly solid performance in the first outing earned him, and allow Lewis to go out the right way by either avenging a bad showing or being clearly beaten and passing the torch. And, most importantly, in the event that Klitschko won, it would have kept intact the heavyweight title's lineage.

With all due respect to THE RING's championship policy, lineage (The man who beat the man who beat the man ...) has always been *my* only measure of determining who the true heavyweight ruler is. And it's remarkable how that chain has stayed intact and endured events that seemed certain to break it, everything from Muhammad Ali's exile in 1967 for refusing military induction to his retiring on the throne in 1978 to Shannon Briggs being awarded an unjust decision over George Foreman in 1997.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Would a rematch with Vitali Klitschko have ruined Lewis?

For the record, here's the line of succession: Floyd Patterson to Ingemar Johansson to Patterson to Sonny Liston to Cassius Clay/Ali to Joe Frazier to Foreman to Ali to Leon Spinks to Ali to Larry Holmes to Michael Spinks to Mike Tyson to Buster Douglas to Evander Holyfield to Riddick Bowe to Holyfield to Michael Moorer to Foreman to Briggs to Lewis to Hasim Rahman to Lewis.

Now, though, for the first time since Rocky Marciano retired without losing the belt in the ring nearly a half-century ago and Patterson met Archie Moore for the vacant throne, boxing will find itself with a break in the lineage. And whom are we supposed to label the real heavyweight king? The winner of a Klitschko-Corrie Sanders clash for the vacant WBC title? Chris Byrd, the IBF king who might not have even deserved the decision in his most recent defense, against Fres Oquendo? John Ruiz, who's the WBA boss again and who comes with more baggage than a sold-out 747 flying from Bombay to Calcutta? Oh, what a mess this is.

And wait, it's going to get much worse. Alphabet crowns are now going to get passed around like the easiest girl in high school. And because no one on the heavyweight landscape looks capable of establishing himself as a dominant or even somewhat dominant force for years to come, fossils, has-beens, and sideshow attractions will be resurfacing in droves. That's because anyone who captures an alphabet belt will be able to claim he's the real king of the big men and no Lewis will be on the scene to dispute him or bounce him off the canvas to emphatically conclude the discussion.

Already, the 55-year-old Foreman says he wants to come back for one fight, a "title" bout, no doubt. And promoter Don King was offering him $20-million for it before an opponent had even been named! (If Foreman really wanted to get one more showdown out of his system, he should have scheduled a rumble five years ago, when there would have been less of a chance of him suffering a massive heart attack during battle. Fifty-five is a speed limit, not an age at which men are supposed to engage in an activity as strenuous as boxing.) Ex-WBA titlist Bruce Seldon, who hasn't fought since he unraveled in one round against Tyson in 1996, is also training again (*sigh*). Let the games begin.

Unfortunately, not everyone is as anxious as me to blast Lewis at a time like this. In fact, the temptation to start overrating the Briton as he hangs up the protective cup is too much for some people to resist. Historian Hank Kaplan told *The Miami Herald* that it'll take some time to put Lewis' career into perspective, but then added, "You can make a case of him being the greatest heavyweight champion who ever lived." Easy there, Hank. There's no Liston, Frazier, or Foreman on Lewis' resume. And as for the claim that the Englishman owned "the greatest right hand in the history of boxing," sorry, but it wasn't better than the hydrogen bomb Earnie Shavers used to drop on his rivals.

Of course, a one-punch knockout of Klitschko in a rematch might have made me rethink my opinion. Or, maybe a dozen right hands bouncing harmlessly off the Ukrainian's chin, as he battered Lewis en route to lifting the title, would have solidified it. Instead, we're left to speculate. Would Lewis have run out of energy again? Would Klitschko's scar tissue have reopened? Would the two warriors have paced themselves better this time? Or instead charged right after each other from the opening bell?

Thanks a lot, Lennox. Thanks for *not* clearing things up. Thanks for returning us to the era of Greg Page, Tony Tubbs, and Trevor Berbick. Thanks for going out not on your shield or on the shoulders of your supporters, but on a telephone conference call to some writers.

How *will* you be remembered by history? As a matter of fact, probably quite fondly. And how will I remember you? Let me get back to you on that. After a few months have passed and the veins are no longer bulging in my neck. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

STOPPING ALL FIXES

Oscar De La Hoya, the world's greatest eight-round fighter, yells that his rematch with Shane Mosley was fixed, he calls for an investigation, and next thing you know the Feds are investigating *his* promoter. And they wonder why people don't trust cops.

An anonymous federal agent bragged to the New York *Daily News* gossip sheet that someone's going down. The lid will blow, the cock will crow, expect some strife, run for your life.

We've got millions of jobless workers, disappearing forests, cancerous air, schools without textbooks, hungry and unvaccinated children, widespread drug addiction, mental patients sleeping on sidewalks, G.I.s getting maimed and killed in Iraq, and maniacal terrorists trying to kill us. And guess what John Ashcroft's Justice Department has been up to. Trying to find out if anybody fixed the fights of Butterbean and Jorge Paez.

Obviously no fights should be fixed—not even Butterbean or Paez clown contests. But no one in boxing has taken ex-circus performer Paez seriously for years. And Butterbean was never more than a novelty act. If Ashcroft's people really want to look into fixes, why don't they walk down the street to the Pentagon and ask why it awards no-bid contracts to Dick Cheney's old corporation Haliburton?

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Maybe it was coincidence, but after Oscar called for an investigation, Top Rank got one

But this Justice Department is extremely selective in determining which fixes to investigate. Much as I'd like to know more about alleged Butterbean and Paez rigged outcomes, I'm more intrigued that back when his daddy was President, our current President used family connections to get a sweetheart local-government deal for his Texas Rangers baseball franchise. Doesn't that smell like a fix? Personally, I've always wanted to own the Chicago Cubs. But no one ever handed me a stadium.

As soon as they got a whiff of scandal, the powerful *Los Angeles Times* threw in plenty of resources to dig up all it could. But like so many newspapers, the *Times* has little interest in actually covering boxing contests—only the negative, freakish incidents connected to them.

Snob sports editors like the *Times*' Bill Dwyre pay only a little more attention to boxing than to those Afghan horsemen who swat goat carcasses around in the dirt. So it was no surprise when L.A. fighter Francisco Bojado defeated Emmanuel Clottey in a nationally televised HBO contest and got not one word of mention in the next day's *Times*.

The only boxing coverage in that huge Sunday paper was a tiny-print list of six upcoming fights. To further illustrate the depth of the paper's commitment, two of them weren't even scheduled anymore. James Toney vs. Jameel McCline in Las Vegas was scratched at least a couple of days earlier, and Kostya Tszyu vs. Sharmba Mitchell in Moscow had been called off *nine days* before.

I have no idea what Ashcroft's shamuses will dig up. I just know that boxing is a rough world peopled with some rough characters, and

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Ward's third fight with Gatti took an unfortunate toll

that's unlikely to change soon. Ballet impresarios don't make it in the fight game, though Cedric Kushner and Shelly Finkel came out of the almost equally nasty business of rock and roll. Its stars drop dead regularly with enough dope in them to knock out an entire hockey team. Or they climb into the back of a plane that couldn't pass a safety check in Zanzibar and never climb out again.

Most boxing people are in fact honest, but you'd never know it reading foolish publications like the New York *Daily News* and *L.A. Times*.

DISMAYING NEWS: Jack Kerouac said some lives are like skyrockets. They don't last long but dazzle us with their brightness. Sadly, that may be true for the career of junior feather Edwin Valero, 21, whom I mentioned in my last column. The Venezuelan phenom with a record of 12 fights and 12 first-round kayos was removed from a card in New York after a brain scan showed irregularities. Here's to his long, happy, healthy life.

PUT RUIZ ON HOLD: Once again, while the rest of us took our eyes off his miserable sludge pile of a career, King-promoted John Ruiz became a mandatory heavyweight contender. Yes, in the secret confines of its hideout, an alphabet gang decided once more to try foisting the clinch-mongering Bostonian off as a "champion."

The secretive, cash-crazed, King-tamed WBA looked at all the heavyweights in all the world and decided that Ruiz—who forces more than 200 clinches per 12-round contest—was the most deserving challenger for the title then held by Roy Jones. Huh? I'd swear that just last year in Las Vegas I watched the smaller, infinitely abler Jones slam human octopus Ruiz all over the ring. Shortly before our press deadline, Jones let go of the belt and "interim" titleholder Ruiz was instantly elevated the meaningless position of "WBA champion," putting more loot into gang coffers. As to where it goes from there, your guess is as good as mine.

FIGHTERS' HARD DUES: HBO, which followed around the battered, vision-impaired Micky Ward for days and weeks after his third fight with Arturo Gatti, showed us something mesmerizing, important, and hard to watch. Fans who viewed it were like steak eaters visiting a slaughterhouse. The fighters' injuries are the hard reality of the underside of our pleasure.

Watching Ward, I had a flashback of Marco Antonio Barrera, whom I happened to see the morning after his first fight with Erik Morales. He looked like someone had beaten him with a spiked club. Morales, wherever he was, probably looked even worse.

Particularly heartbreaking was the fact that Barrera, who edged his gallant adversary in that historic slugfest, was robbed by the judges. This was a stark illustration that fighters' safety and honest, competent officiating must go hand in hand. Which brings us to …

MAGOOS: Omar Sheika had Scott Pemberton down in the second and scored another knockdown in the sixth when his super middleweight adversary was hanging over the ropes like somebody's wash. Yet Sheika, who probably deserved to win at least another round or two in addition to those in which Pemberton was given eight-counts, won only one round, according to judge Crystal Wright. She saw it 88-82 Pemberton in the nine rounds scored. Atrocious. Judges Steve Weisfeld and Don Ackerman had it a more realistic 86-84 and 85-83, respectively, also for Pemberton.

And why did referee Gary Rosato, who finally stopped the crowd-thrilling contest in round 10, stand frozen while Sheika, with a telltale, vacant stare in his eyes, stomped around like a zombie with his brain in Birdland? And where were Sheika's cornermen? Sheika took at least 15 clean powerpunches after he was clearly out of it. This slovenly, dangerous officiating was brought to us courtesy of the unregulated tribal commission of the Foxwoods Resort in Connecticut.

ANOTHER FOXWOODS MAGOO: A month earlier, in the same ring in the same casino, referee Eddie Cotton ruled four knockdowns for Acelino "Popo" Freitas over Artur Grigorian in their lightweight match. Trouble is, only one of those four knockdowns was legit. The rest were slips.

Cotton's unjustified calls took the heart right out of Grigorian, an Uzbekistan native fighting out of Germany who'd never before competed in the U.S. I half-expected Cotton to start throwing his own combinations at Grigorian.

Cotton also took an unmerited point from Freitas for a low blow. Could he have been playing catch-up to make up for all his crummy calls favoring the popular Popo? ■

PHOTO BY GREGG MARRANE

If not for this knockdown, Crystal Wright might not have given Sheika a round

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Forget about the dinky green belt; it's hardware like this that really gets fighters excited. After defeating Toshiaki Nishioka in Saitama, Japan, bantamweight beltholder Veerapol Sahaprom won a trophy that's probably taller and heavier than he is, plus another one that's almost as ridiculously large just for good measure. If Veerapol wins his next fight, they're probably going to have to back the trophies up to the ring on a truck.

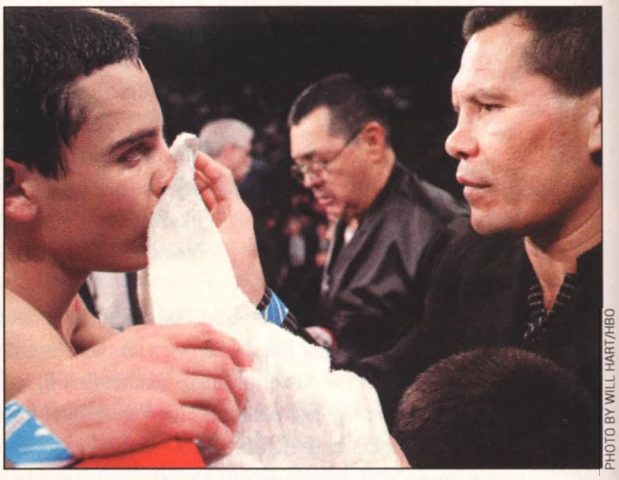


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

You're never too old to have Daddy help you blow your nose. After running his professional record to 5-0 (1), Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., who is supposedly 18 years old but looks about 12, received a helping hand from his famous father. After "J.C. Superstar" finished wiping up the kid's face, he reportedly spoon-fed Junior some Gerber's and later changed his diaper.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Shouldn't there be a big lightbulb going on directly above Don King's head in this picture? It appears an idea was occurring to him just as this photo was taken, and if we had to guess, we'd say it was a money-making scheme involving the young man seated next to him.

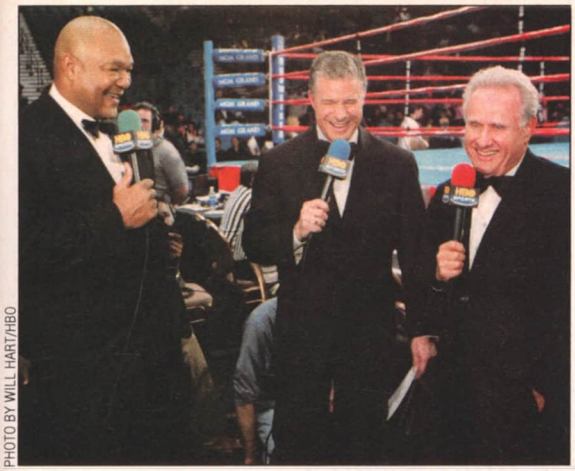


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Larry Merchant's "knock knock" jokes slay 'em every time! The HBO on-air gang of George Foreman, Jim Lampley, and Merchant share a hearty laugh during Foreman's final broadcast. It should be interesting to see if Lamps and Larry are still laughing if and when Foreman un-retires (as an announcer, mind you!) and rejoins them at the broadcast table.

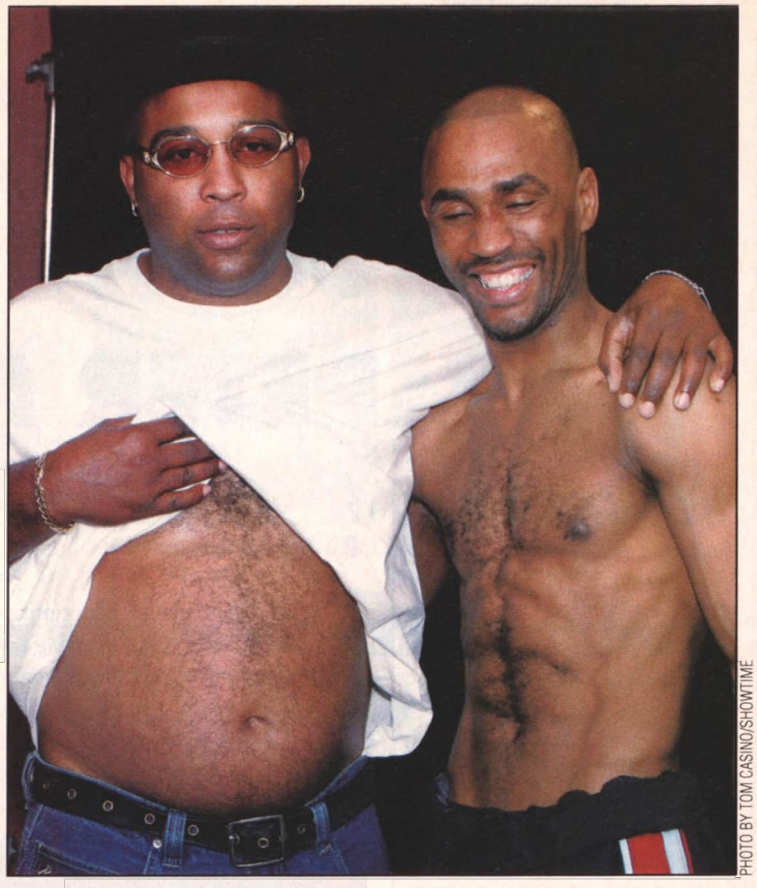


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Can you guess which of these two former titleholders is a day away from a major fight and which one isn't? After Joel Casamayor showed off his impressive six-pack at the weigh-in for his rematch with Diego Corrales, trainer Belly McGut—oops, make that Buddy McGirt—demonstrated that he may just be an expert on a different kind of six-pack.

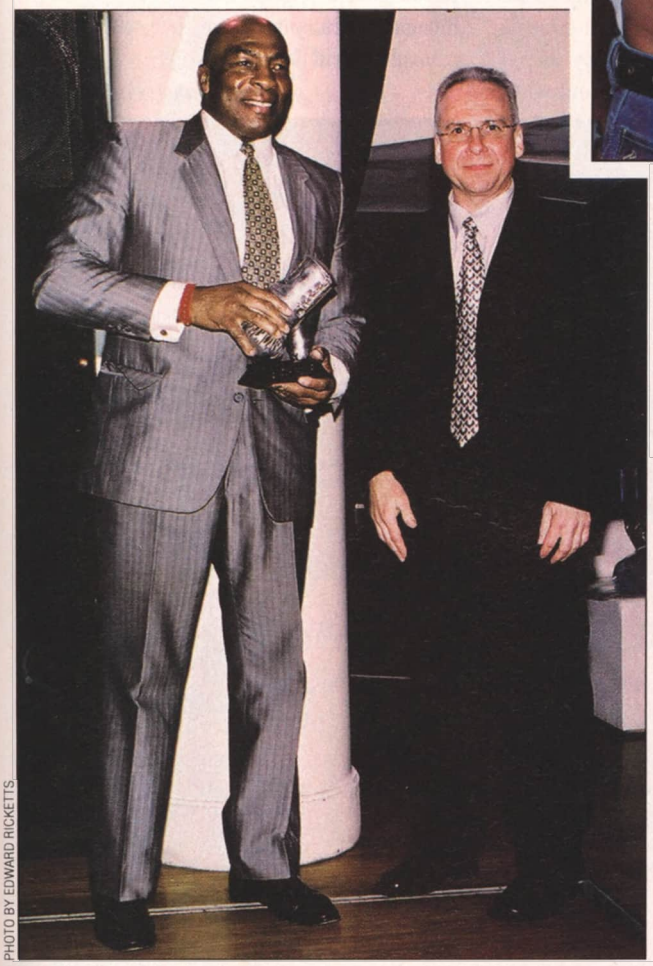


PHOTO BY EDWARD RICKETTS

Although much more accustomed to being on the other side of the camera, regular RING contributor Tom Casino made the switch from photographer to subject when he and former heavyweight contender Earnie Shavers were among those honored at a charity event to benefit Acorns Hospice in Birmingham, England, recently. Notice how Casino let Shavers hold the award; it's probably not a bad move to be friendly to one of the hardest hitters in boxing history.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

There is no greater honor than to have the former heavyweight champion of the world belch in your ear. Actually, what's happening here is that Jack Dempsey is giving Brian London some after-the-fact advice (or at least pretending to give him advice to make for a nice publicity shot) following London's unsuccessful title challenge of Floyd Patterson in 1959.

NEW FACES

PETER MANFREDO

Junior Middleweight

By Joe Santoliquito

Peter Manfredo has his priorities aligned. Amid the constant banging hammers of his day job, and the slamming heavy-bags of his night gig, Manfredo keeps his dream of boxing immortality grounded in realistic goals: Make enough money to pay the bills, live comfortably, and get out while he still has most of his brain matter intact.

Whether or not Manfredo, 20-0 (10), will actually do that remains a question. But he's off to a good start, making enough money to keep away bill collectors, and putting himself in position to possibly make a whole lot more. An impressive victory over an undefeated fighter on national TV will do that for you.

(Continued on page 82)

PRO RECORD

2000		
Sept. 22	Steve Garrett, Cranston, RI	W 4
Nov. 17	Francisco Arroche, Cranston	W 4
Dec. 22	Cornell Hester, Ledyard, CT	KO 2
2001		
March 2	Ron Carnell, Cranston	KO 1
May 4	Manny Teo, Uncasville, CT	KO 4
June 2	Antonio Baker, Cranston	KO 4
Aug. 10	Rhon Roberts, Ledyard	W 4
Sept. 21	Troy Barnes, Cranston	W 6
Nov. 2	Ian Gardner, Ledyard	W 6
Nov. 16	Kenny Stubbs, Cranston	KO 4
Dec. 13	John Lennox Lewis, Uncasville	W 4
2002		
March 1	Tommy Attardo, Ledyard	W 4
April 4	Grady Brewer, Ledyard	W 8
May 24	Mike McFail, Cranston	KO 8
July 26	Charles Clark, Cranston	W 10
Oct. 4	Frankie Randall, Providence, RI	KO 7
2003		
April 26	Ron Johnson, Brockton, MA	KO 2
June 27	Victor Rosado, Providence	W 10
Sept. 12	Leonard Townsend, Phila.	KO 6
2004		
Jan. 23	Sherwin Davis, Ledyard	KO 6

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
20	20	0	0	10

PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

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FIST CASTING

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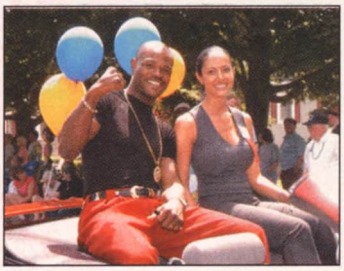
PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.



Hooray . . . Terry Norris strikes a fight pose for the fans.

CELEBRITY BOXING NIGHT

ANGEL MANFREDY

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

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Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

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Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Ricardo Lopez points to his boxing shoes on display.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Christy Martin laces up her gloves and Bernard Hopkins hits the speed bag.

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Having Fun. . . Frank Bruno and Bert Sugar team up for a ringside lecture.

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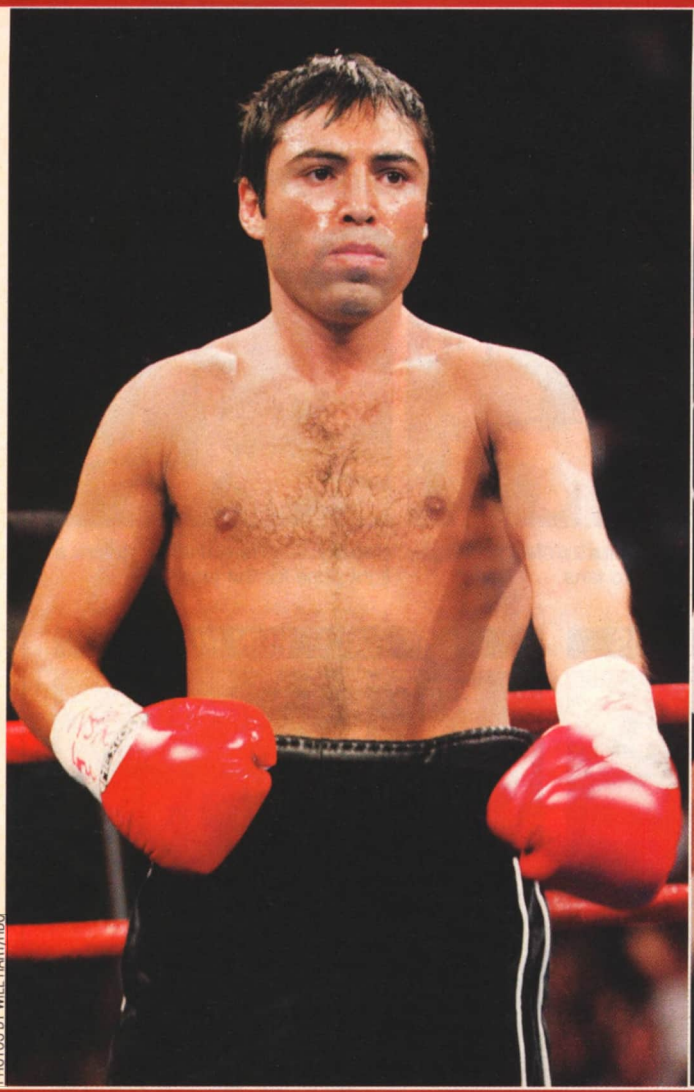
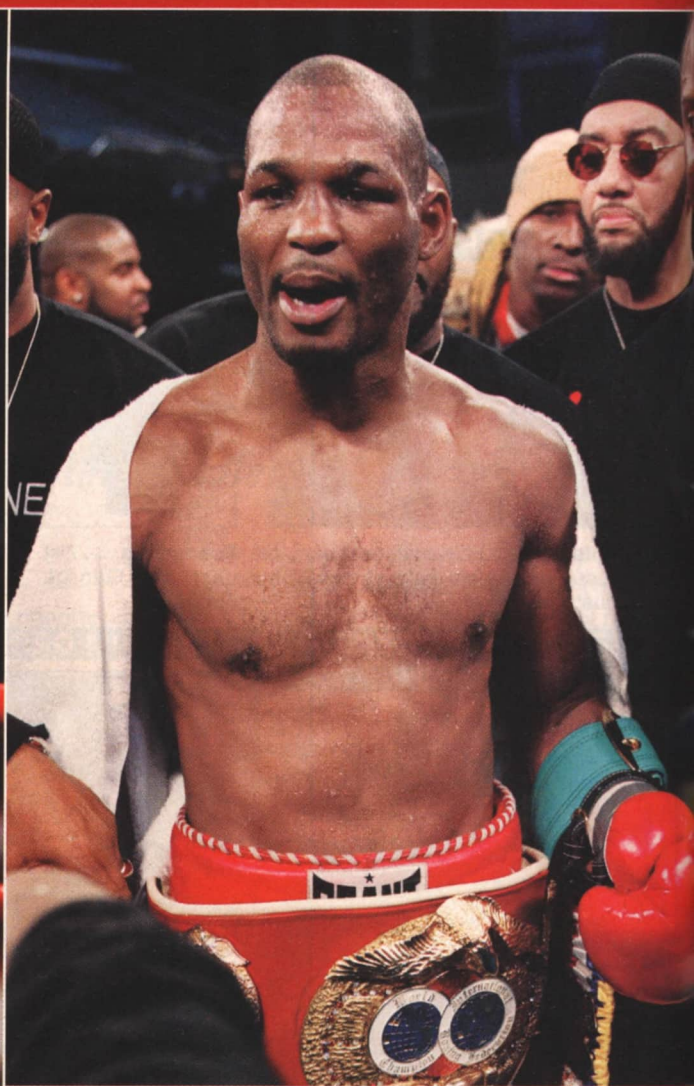




PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

The New Middleweight Golden Era?

Hopkins-De La Hoya Is Only The Beginning

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

By William Dettloff

If you took a look at the rankings at middleweight and didn't know any better, you'd think the division is worse than it's ever been. Look at who's there. The champion, clearly the best fighter in the division, is pushing 40. Many of his contenders are not only mediocre, but also largely unknown; several have never fought in the United States. Two of the top American contenders already have lost resoundingly in title fights, and the single well-known American prospect is promising but wholly unproven. What a wasteland. And it's been this way for a long time.

What we wouldn't give today for Rocky Graziano and Tony Zale. Oh, for the days of Jake LaMotta and Charley Burley, Marcel Cerdan and Ray Robinson. If only we had a Mickey Walker today, or a Harry Greb, or a Tiger Flowers. Those guys fought in what were Golden Eras for middleweights. The 1920s, the '40s—when middleweights represented the best there were in the fight game and everyone knew it. The heavyweights made more money even then, yes, but after that came middleweight. That's where all the action was.

You don't even have to go back that far; it was the same way in the '80s: Marvin Hagler and Ray Leonard, Tommy Hearns and Roberto Duran. Wilfred Benitez was up there, too, toward the end. All those wonderful 160-pound fighters, give or take a few pounds, all meeting one another in superfights every time we turned around. It didn't matter that some started out as welterweights or junior welterweights, or even, in Duran's case, as a lightweight, for cripe's sake. They all kept getting bigger and meeting up at 160 for the big fights. Man, were we lucky then. If only we'd known it. We would have appreciated it more.

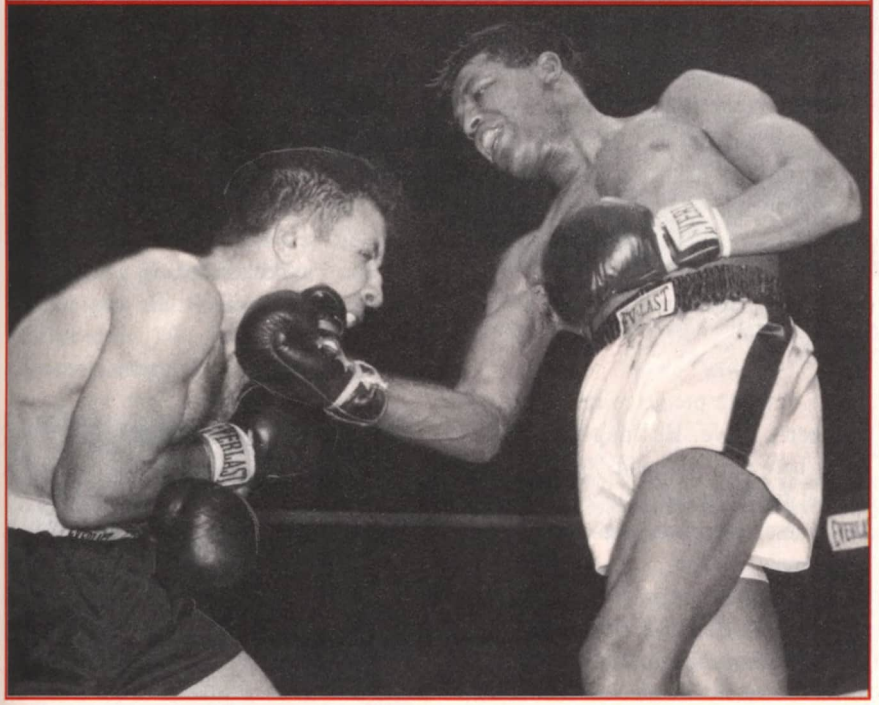
We just might get a second chance.

Forget the rankings. Look forward. In September, Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya will meet, provided they both win tuneups in June. By the time you read this, Shane Mosley will have fought Winky Wright for the junior middleweight title, and the winner probably will meet Felix Trinidad—at 160. Those three fights, all good enough on their own, set up the potential for any number of attractive followup bouts: Mosley-Hopkins, Hopkins-Wright, Hopkins-Trinidad II, Trinidad-De La Hoya II, Wright-De La Hoya, Mosley-De La Hoya III, etc. Putting aside the precise quality of the fighters for the moment, are those fights any less attractive on paper than were Hagler-Hearns, Leonard-Hagler, or Hagler-Duran? Are they inferior to Greb-Walker or Walker-Flowers? As matchups go, aren't they just as good as LaMotta-Cerdan, or Cerdan-Zale?

"I got an idea for you," chuckled Hall of Fame trainer and manager Lou Duva. "Find Graziano and Robinson and Zale and LaMotta and Cerdan, and put them in a tournament with all these guys today, now, and they'll fit right in. Those guys fought everybody. They were real fighters. They were tough. If you averaged them together they all had about 100 fights. And they fought 15 rounds, not 12. They fought each other all the time. It's not like today where these guys can only fight each other when they're with the same promoter or when there's big money involved."

Duva, who is famously dismissive of most contemporary fighters, is right in that Graziano, Zale, Robinson et al, were wonderful prize fighters. But it is not that much of a stretch to consider that as a group, Hopkins, De La Hoya, Trinidad, Mosley, Wright, and a few others, pitted against one another in a series of fights, recall periods when outstanding middleweights produced wonderful events, one after another, the results of which are

Legendary middleweights Mickey Walker and Harry Greb shake hands after agreeing to fight at the Polo Grounds in July 1925. Their championship bout drew more than 60,000 fans to see Greb win a close decision in the climactic bout of one of the 160-pound division's early Golden Eras.

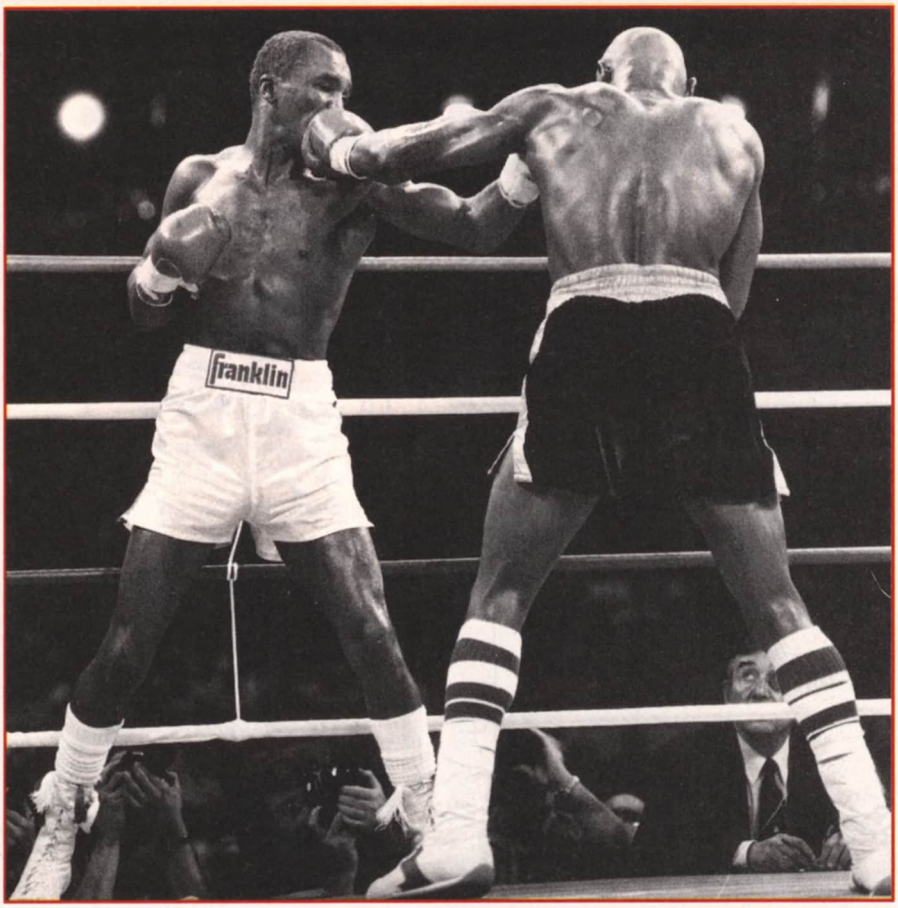


There were many great middleweight rivalries in the 1940s and '50s: Rocky Graziano is pictured nailing Tony Zale with a right hand during the second bout of their thrilling trilogy (top), while Ray Robinson is seen catching Jake LaMotta in the sixth and final installment of their famous series (above).

viewed today, in retrospect, as being part of a Golden Era.

Consider: In the '80s, Hagler, Hearns, Duran, Leonard, and Benitez all were considered among the very best fighters in the business. (You could exclude Leonard if you like because he was inactive before making his middleweight debut against Hagler, but it would be nitpicking; people knew that if he were active he'd be right in the pound-for-pound mix.) It is likewise with today's fighters: Hopkins is in everybody's top three pound-for-pound; De La Hoya and Mosley are generally in the top five or six. Wright falls just outside in the analyses of most, but a win over any of the top guys is hardly out of the question. And Trinidad's status is analogous to Leonard's: If he'd been active over the last year, he'd rank solidly among the best in the game, pound-for-pound.

Clearly, as a group and in terms of their positioning among their peers both



Marvelous Marvin Hagler sends a left into Sugar Ray Leonard's face during their April 1987 fight in which Leonard grabbed the undisputed middleweight title in a major upset. The bout was the biggest of many significant middleweight bouts held in the 1980s.

in and out of the middleweight class, there are similarities between the fighters of the last great middleweight era and the 160-pounders of today. There are individual correlations as well. Hopkins, for example, is the first dominant middleweight champion since Hagler, and the common perception is that he came up the hard way, like Hagler did.

"It's a very valid comparison," said Fox SportsNet commentator and longtime boxing broadcaster Barry Tompkins. "Hopkins really corresponds well to Hagler. Like Hagler, he's never really gotten the credit he deserves. If he really beats De La Hoya convincingly, maybe he'll get his just due. I've seen him fight every kind of fighter there is, and he always makes an adjustment. He's a very savvy guy."

Throw in the shared work ethic too and the intimidating presence. Throw in the old-school skills and the Philadelphia thing if you want. No, Hagler wasn't from Philadelphia, as Hopkins is, but he was a definite presence in the City of Brotherly Love. He fought there five times between 1976 and '78. It's where he lost to Willie Monroe and Boogaloo Watts and where he beat Cyclone Hart and Bennie Briscoe.

The similarities go further than that, of course. De La Hoya is the biggest non-heavyweight attraction in the business, just as Leonard was. He was once considered an overhyped media creation and a pretty boy (and still is by a shrinking minority) just as Leonard was. And, he is the guy who brings the money. He is the fighter the rest will follow, just as Leonard was. If he wasn't going to 160, it's unlikely anyone else would be. Tompkins agrees. "De La Hoya certainly fits Leonard's role in that he's the guy everyone wants to fight. He's the money guy."

Indeed, some of that rock-star money may be what brings other younger, smaller, or lesser-known guys up to 160. There's a whole crop of excellent junior middleweights that we think would make the jump to middle given the right set of circumstances. Don't you think Kassim Ouma would happily gain six pounds if he knew it gave him a shot at De La Hoya? Ditto Tokunbo Olajide? Or how about Vernon Forrest? He's certainly big enough to carry 160, and don't think for a moment that he wouldn't jump at the chance to take down a few million to face De La Hoya or Trinidad, or to try to go 3-0 against Mosley. If they can, fighters will go where De La Hoya goes. Right now there are a lot who will go to 160 if they think they can get him there. That includes Fernando Vargas too, if he can get his myriad ailments and injuries behind him and get back to 100 percent. And forget about De La Hoya for a minute. Wouldn't Vargas-Mosley be fun? Or Vargas-Trinidad II? Or Vargas-Hopkins? Or Vargas-Forrest? The mind reels at the possibilities.

It may be that we're getting ahead of ourselves. There's no guarantee De La Hoya will stay at middleweight even if he beats Hopkins, which at this time, seems unlikely. He may want to drop back down to 154, where he'll be more comfortable. But remember what

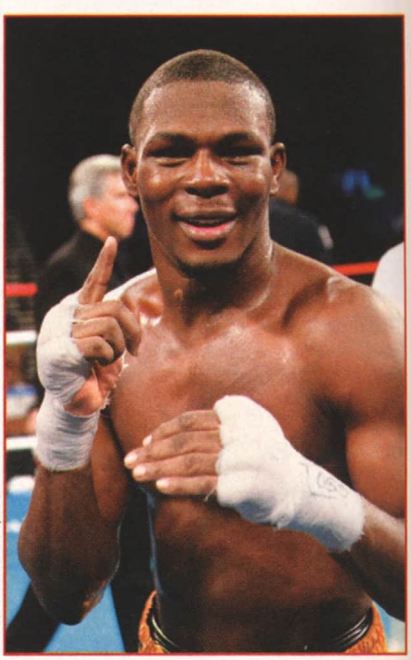


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Former Olympian Jermain Taylor is considered by many as the heir apparent to the middleweight throne, but most experts believe he needs more seasoning before taking on the division's top guns.

he's said all along: He wants to get Trinidad again. In order for that to happen, they'll have to weigh in the neighborhood of 160. But after his time off, Trinidad is a question too.

"I think Trinidad is the wild card here," said Tompkins. "I'm not sure what he's got left. Guys who try to come back after a major loss and after time off have a problem. I know Leonard did it, but it's hard. Plus Trinidad is one of these guys who blows up between fights. He's a factor because of his name and because of what he was. I'm not saying that he can't compete at that level, but it's hard. I'd like to be wrong about this one. If he's got anything left, at his best he's capable of beating any of these guys."

It's conceivable, too, that we'll get these big three fights and things will peter out at 160, especially if Hopkins beats De La Hoya and decides to retire. He'll be almost 40, will have earned that huge payday he's always chased, and what will he have left to prove? Really, there's no guarantee beyond the three fights even if both Hopkins and De La Hoya remain active. There have been more superfights over time that weren't made than ones that were. The causes are many.

"The problem is there's a big financial mix now," Duva said. "Back then [in the '40s] there was no financial mix; there was a fighter's mix. Nowadays there has to be big money involved. Here's an example: Ouma's supposed to be the mandatory challenger for the winner of Mosley and Wright. Do you think Ouma will get a shot? Of course not; nobody knows who he is. All anyone cares about is the draw. It's about the ability of the fighter to draw, not how good he is. It's a TV business."

It's true that the biggest money fights will get made, maybe at the expense of less profitable, more interesting ones, but that's always been the case. The true impediment to some of these bouts getting made may turn out to be promoter and television affiliations, and especially the alphabet groups and multiple titlists, factors that didn't exist in the past to the degree that they do today. Philadelphia-based promoter J Russell Peltz, who recently was voted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, sees this as a significant stumbling block.

"Here's my theory," said Peltz. "In the days of one champion, all these other guys would be contenders and would be fighting each other to climb up the ladder and get a shot at the title. Money would be made in 10-round fights. That's why I'm never surprised when a so-called superstar like De La Hoya or Mosley or Forrest gets beat, because, to me, it's simply one contender fighting another, just like in the old days when nobody went unbeaten. So De La Hoya beats Quartey, loses to Trinidad, loses to Mosley, then Mosley gets anointed God, but loses to Forrest, who becomes the new superstar, then he loses to Mayorga, who becomes the second coming and then he loses to Spinks, etc. It's simply a matter of top-10 guys fighting each other, winning some, losing some—at least that's how it would be in the good old days."

Sitting back and observing all this of course, is Jermain Taylor, who has the time to be patient. The temptation may be for him to jump into the fray while the big names are still in the game, to get some of that money with the getting is good. The flip side is, why rush? He's young. Let all those older guys get tired of busting one another up and then go in and clean up. By that time Hopkins might be in his early-40s and then, finally, maybe he'll be ready to be taken.

"Taylor is still raw and would be wise not to get into that mix yet," offered Tompkins. "But I think he's good. He's really got skills. I've been fooled before, but I really like his hand speed and balance. That said, I'd like to see him get hit. Who knows what happens when he gets in there with a Robert Allen or somebody and gets hit on the chin."

Whether he wants to or not, Taylor will have to wait his turn. There are big fights to be had at middleweight, and lots of money to be made. It's going to be very interesting over the next year. Maybe it's a Golden Era, maybe it isn't. It depends on your point of view. We'll be watching either way. ■

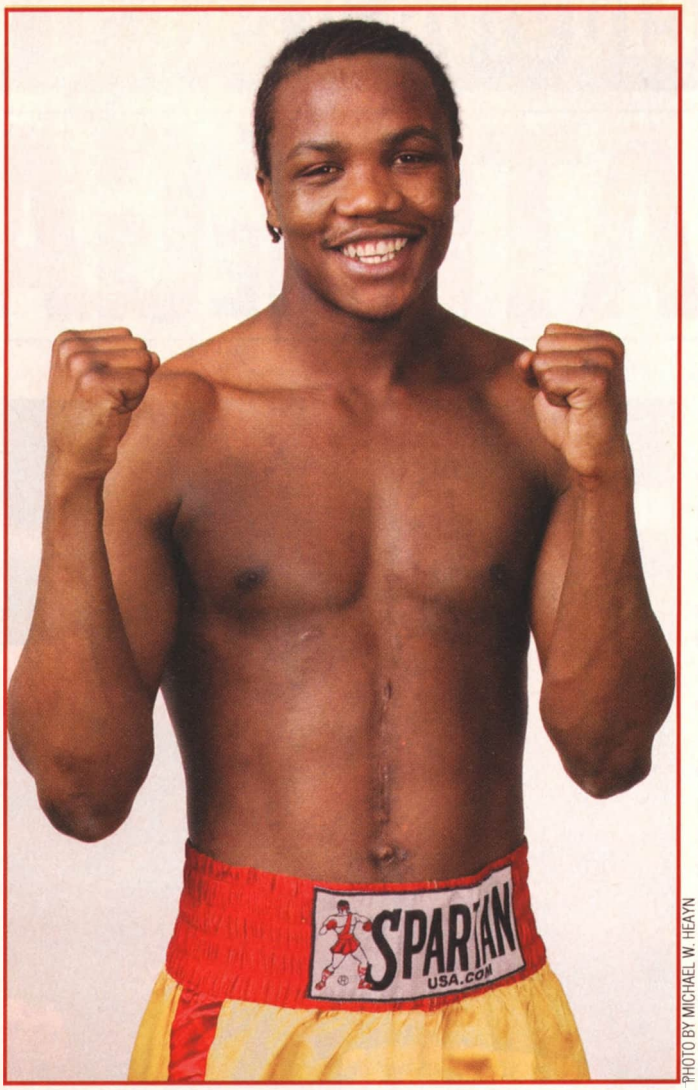


PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. HEAYN

The junior middleweight class has a number of fresh up-and-comers who might want to add six pounds to compete among the full-fledged middles. Among the best is Kassim Ouma, the all-action 154-pound contender from Uganda.

Our Exclusive Annual Report

THE STATE OF THE GAME

By Eric Raskin

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Vitali Klitschko tries to take the title from Lennox Lewis

You can be excused if, a few months ago, you were pessimistic about boxing's future. Really pessimistic. We're talking Lou DiBella pessimistic here. There really wasn't much to be optimistic about, with ESPN slashing its financial support for the sport, the Feds raiding Top Rank's offices, one big fight after another spoiled by injuries, and the heavyweight champion of the world announcing his retirement. Maybe the boxing haters were right after all. Maybe the sport we love really was dying.

*And then, all of a sudden, everything started turning around. Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya were signing contracts to fight each other. Felix Trinidad was announcing his return. Pay-per-view industry insiders were talking about record numbers of buys. Madison Square Garden was coming back. World title fights—**real** world title fights—were springing up all over the place, including one to crown a new heavyweight champion.*

The glass was again half-full—with the potential to be overflowing by year's end.

Even in the mainstream, boxing is making a comeback. Production is underway on movies about Joe Louis and Jim Braddock, you can't flip through the channels for five minutes without seeing Laila and Muhammad Ali floating and stinging all over each other, and NBC is paying $2-million per episode to put a Sylvester Stallone boxing reality show on in prime time. Sure, it's kind of a slap in the face, since NBC could put together damned attractive live fights with that kind of a budget. But if the show opens the sport up to a whole new audience, doesn't it seem conceivable that live fights in prime time might follow?

Just like that, it is an exciting time to be a boxing fan. That's how quickly the state of this game changes. And that's part of why we run this "State Of The Game" section every year. So much can happen in a 365-day span. The state of boxing is so vastly altered from how it was 365 days ago, and aren't you just dying to see how it will have changed 365 days from now?

Unfortunately, we can't predict the future. But over the next 16 pages, we will break down every little intricacy of the present time, with the most in-depth analysis of this sport you'll read anywhere.

One note: In each division, we name a fighter who "Deserves A Title Shot." What this means in a given division depends upon whether there's a **RING** *champ. If there is one (or there will be one by the time this magazine comes out), then we've named the man most deserving of a crack at that champ. If not, then we've named a non-beltholder worthy of a shot at an alphabet title.*

HEAVYWEIGHTS

What kind of a world are we living in where **Lennox Lewis** is retired at age 38, but **Evander Holyfield** isn't at age 41, and **George Foreman** might not be either at age 55? This is a world in which three blown-up middleweights (**Chris Byrd**, **Roy Jones**, and **James Toney**) reside in the heavyweight division's top five, along with a guy who's best known for his two losses (**Vitali Klitschko**) and a guy who's fought less than five rounds in nearly four years (**Corrie Sanders**).

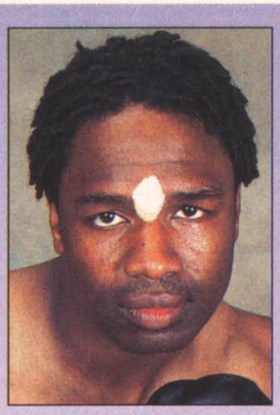
Welcome to the heavyweight division, 2004. If chaos turns you on, you've come to the right place. After all, the division's two alphabet beltholders, as of press time, were Byrd, who hardly anybody believes won his last fight (against **Fres Oquendo**), and **John Ruiz**, who got dominated by Jones and somehow, less than a year later, was handed back the title he lost to Jones. The biggest potential box office attractions in the division are Jones, who may never fight at heavyweight again (thanks for the tease, Roy), **Mike Tyson**, who would be totally out of boxing right now if he weren't dead-broke, and Foreman, who's anything but dead-broke, but refuses to completely close the book on his Hall of Fame career.

But here's the good news: Klitschko and Sanders are planning on fighting each other, and the winner will be the one and only true heavyweight champion of the world. So forget the alphabet madness. Forget, for the moment, Toney's momentum-crushing injury, **David Tua's** inactivity, the Ruiz-**Hasim Rahman** atrocity, the dearth of good heavies under the age of 30, and everything else that's wrong with the division. The most important thing is that, possibly even by the time you read this, there will be a RING heavyweight champion. And if it's Klitschko, there will be a highly popular heavyweight champion, one capable of making the mainstream care about the most prestigious title in sports more than the aloof Lewis ever did.

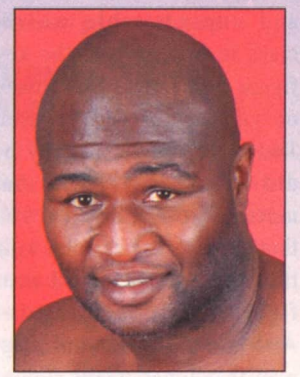
In a sense, Lewis passed the torch to Klitschko last June in Los Angeles, when he made Klitschko a hero in defeat. And if Klitschko can pick up that torch and run with it, at least until his brother **Wladimir**, or **Dominick Guinn**, or some as-yet-undiscovered next big thing is ready to carry it, then we'll emerge from this transitional period in decent shape after all.

Think About It: A lot of experts believe that losing is a vital learning experience, but fans typically prefer their fighters undefeated. That's not great news for the heavyweight division, one of only two in the sport (junior flyweight is the other) in which THE RING's ratings don't include a single undefeated fighter. In fact, Jones is the only fighter in our top 10 who doesn't have at least *two* losses on his record, and there hasn't been an undefeated fighter in the rankings since the November 2002 issue, when **Kirk Johnson** was unbeaten going into his fight with Ruiz.

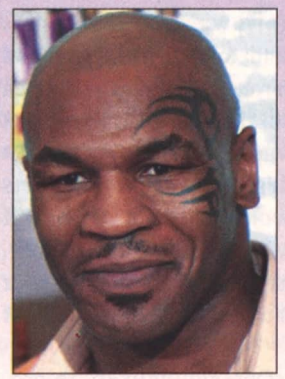
Corrie Sanders



Chris Byrd



James Toney



Mike Tyson

CRUISERWEIGHTS

If the idea of raising the cruiserweight limit from 190 pounds to 200 was to convince the smaller heavyweights to give cruiser a shot and, in turn, make the division matter more, it has failed miserably. James

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Mike Tyson

Best Boxer
James Toney

Most Protected
Malik Scott

Is He Still Around?
Ray Mercer

Matchmaker's Dream
Roy Jones-Mike Tyson

Deserves A Title Shot
Chris Byrd

Most Fun To Watch
Joe Mesi

On The Way Down
Kirk Johnson

Underrated
Fres Oquendo

Overrated
David Tua

Best Fight In 2003
Lennox Lewis KO 6
Vitali Klitschko

CRUISERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Wayne Braithwaite

Best Boxer
Johnny Nelson

Most Protected
Valery Brudov

Is He Still Around?
Arthur Williams

Matchmaker's Dream
Wayne Braithwaite-
Jean-Marc Mormeck

Deserves A Title Shot
O'Neil Bell

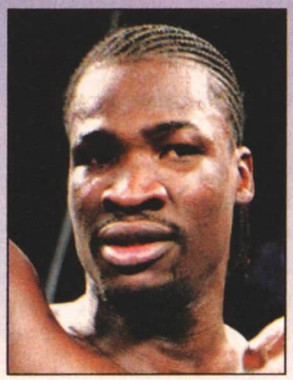
Most Fun To Watch
Wayne Braithwaite

On The Way Down
Derrick Harmon

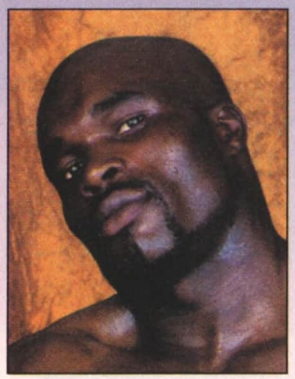
Underrated
Jean-Marc Mormeck

Overrated
Rydell Booker

Best Fight In 2003
James Toney W 12
Vassiliy Jirov



Wayne Braithwaite



Jean-Marc Mormeck

Toney left the division anyway. Cruiserweight mainstay **Vassiliy Jirov** had just taken his first serious heavyweight fight shortly before we went to press. Roy Jones continues to bounce around between heavy and light heavy, but shows no interest in making a stopover in between. The bottom line: After a brief moment in the sun when Toney and Jirov engaged in one of 2003's best fights, the not-quite-heavyweights are again a barren wasteland.

Depending on where Jirov ends up, there *may* still be one star in the division. But without him, you can pretty much forget about HBO televising any cruiser contests anytime soon.

However, what the division lacks in star power and pound-for-pound talent, it makes up in exciting fighters. The top two underneath Jirov—**Wayne Braithwaite** and **Jean-Marc Mormeck**—are both aggressive, all-offense warriors, and just a bit farther down the rankings, guys like **O'Neil Bell**, **Ezra Sellers**, and **Carl Thompson** all engage in thrillers on a fairly regular basis. As perfect as it would be if we could get Don King-promoted beltholders Braithwaite and Mormeck together (for THE RING title if Jirov leaves the division), we'll settle in the meantime for Braithwaite's can't-miss mandatory against Bell, and Mormeck's planned rematch with the man he won his belt from, still-competent old vet **Virgil Hill**. If the winners should fight each other, or if one of them takes on Jirov, that will provide a little juice for a division sorely in need of it.

One guy unlikely to provide that juice is **Johnny Nelson**, now five years and 11 defenses into his WBO title reign. The 37-year-old Nelson has given the division a dose of stability in his time on top, but suffice to say that if that kidnapping plot against him had been successfully carried out last year, it wouldn't have cost us any entertaining fights.

Think About It: Is **Dale Brown** the Oba Carr of cruiserweights? Always a bridesmaid, never a bride, "The Cowboy" has just three defeats on his record: a 10th-round kayo loss to Jirov, an eighth-round stoppage defeat to Braithwaite, and another eighth-round TKO at the hands of Mormeck. That's right, his only losses came against the current number one, two, and three fighters in the division. Carr fell short on a much higher level—against Felix Trinidad, Ike Quartey, and Oscar De La Hoya—but certainly, he feels Brown's pain.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Roy Jones may have taken a lot out of himself sweating and starving his way down to 175 pounds to fight **Antonio Tarver** last November. But by doing so, he also *gave* a lot to a division that had been stale and uncompetitive for far too long.

Over the past 12 months, light heavyweight has been perhaps the most interesting and unpredictable weight class in boxing, and the key figure was Jones. How many of you honestly expected Jones to struggle the way he did with Tarver? For that matter, how many of you thought after Jones-John Ruiz that the champ would ever fight at light heavy again? And how many of you imagined that Jones might continue to fight at light heavy—against Tarver, no less—after what "The Magic Man" put him through?

Who predicted that **Julio Gonzalez** would go to Germany and win a close decision over the 48-0 **Dariusz Michalczewki**? And who anticipated that Gonzalez would then get picked apart in his next fight by the virtually anonymous **Zsolt Erdei**? Who foresaw hard-luck journeyman **Glencoffe Johnson** defeating **Eric Harding**, and, several months later, finally claiming an alphabet title in his *fourth* try? And who would have dreamed, midway through the first round of his fight with **Julian Letterlough**, that **Richard Hall** would not only survive round one, but score a knockout in round two?

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Roy Jones

Best Boxer
Roy Jones

Most Protected
Tomasz Adamek

Is He Still Around?
Peter Venancio

Matchmaker's Dream
Roy Jones-Antonio Tarver II

Deserves A Title Shot
Antonio Tarver

Most Fun To Watch
Dariusz Michalczewski

On The Way Down
Dariusz Michalczewski

Underrated
Glencoffe Johnson

Overrated
Paul Briggs

Best Fight In 2003
Richard Hall KO 2
Julian Letterlough

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Roy Jones shoots a left at Antonio Tarver

PHOTO BY MARCUS BRANDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Julio Gonzalez and Dariusz Michalczewski go head to head

What it all adds up to is a division that has us paying close attention. Jones is two defenses away from tying Bob Foster's division record of 14, but with the Tarver rematch probably on tap, the unthinkable notion of Jones losing before he gets there is suddenly thinkable. And Erdei, Gonzalez, Johnson, Michalczewki, and Harding may not be threats to Jones, but they'll all make for appealing matches (or rematches) with each other while Jones and Tarver battle for supremacy.

Think About It: Jones supporters went out of their way after the narrow escape against Tarver to point out that Jones still did pretty darned well for an almost-35-year-old fighter, and that some slippage should be expected by now. We're not about to try to dispute those points, but the record books show that Jones has quite a bit of company in terms of fighters who've held the light heavy title—or at least a piece of it—after turning 35. Archie Moore, of course, famously held the title until he was 45, and Bob Fitzsimmons (42), Dick Tiger (38), Mike McCallum (38), Dennis Andries (37), Eddie Cotton (36), and Foster (35) all reigned at or beyond Jones' current age.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

The ratings on page 14 still show **Joe Calzaghe** and **Sven Ottke** at the top, same as they have, in one order or another, for the last several years. But despite what the ratings say, there's a changing of the guard taking place at super middleweight. There are a handful of fresher faces on the verge of taking over, and the long-lasting European stranglehold on this division finally appears to be nearing its end.

Ottke's decline is obvious to anyone who's paying attention. The old lady in the "I've fallen and I can't get up" commercials never needed as much help as Ottke did to escape his defense last December against **Robin Reid** with his titles intact. It's been an incredible run for the 36-year-old German—20 defenses over 5½ years—but Joe Louis should be safe. Especially since Ottke is talking about possibly retiring in '04.

Calzaghe, on the other hand, may still be in his physical prime at 31 (though he did suffer the first knockdown of his career last June against **Byron Mitchell**), but he appears set to abandon the 168-pound class before the next generation catches up to him. The Welshman is talking about a move up to light heavy more seriously than ever, and since it seems he and Ottke are never going to get together to crown a *real* world champion at 168 anyway, that's fine with us.

So who's going to take over for Ottke and Calzaghe? It's looking like one of two guys, and we can find both of them in the same place: Australia. Bitter rivals **Anthony Mundine** and **Danny Green** are simultaneously rising to prominence, and an eventual fight between the two of them might give us the RING champion that Calzaghe and Ottke never could. Both are big punchers—especially Green, whose 17 wins have all come by kayo, including his eye-opening blastout of **Eric Lucas**. Mundine, meanwhile, looks like the better boxer,

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Danny Green

Best Boxer
Anthony Mundine

Most Protected
Sven Ottke

Is He Still Around?
Hassine Cherifi

Matchmaker's Dream
Joe Calzaghe-
Bernard Hopkins

Deserves A Title Shot
Danny Green

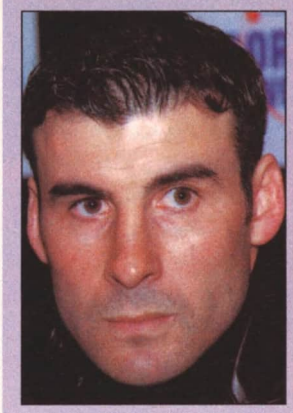
Most Fun To Watch
Scott Pemberton

On The Way Down
Sven Ottke

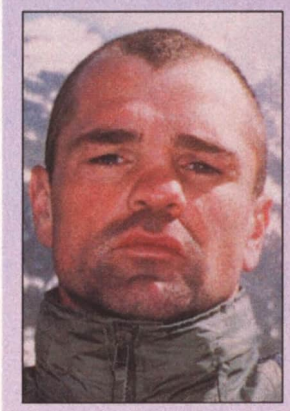
Underrated
Robin Reid

Overrated
Markus Beyer

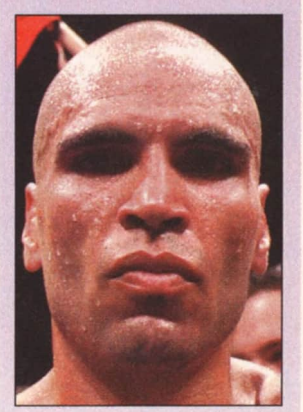
Best Fight In 2003
Scott Pemberton W 12
Omar Sheika



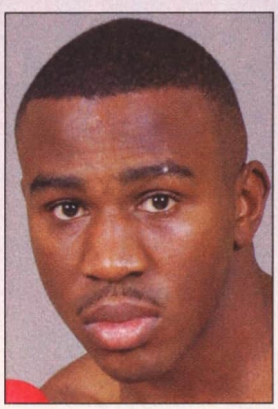
Joe Calzaghe



Sven Ottke



Anthony Mundine



Jeff Lacy

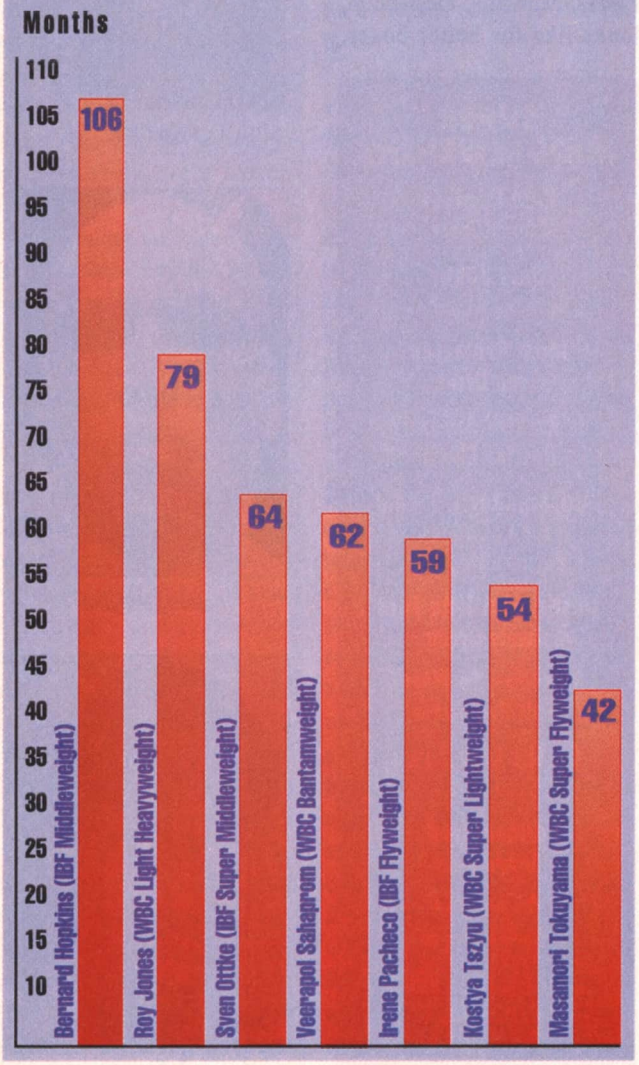
having built a lead over a prime Ottke in '01 before suffering a one-punch kayo defeat, not to mention having cleverly outmaneuvered **Antwun Echols** last September.

And if the future of the division doesn't lie in Australia, perhaps it lies in the good ol' U.S. of A., a country that has not historically ruled this weight class, but has a developing young hope in Olympian **Jeff Lacy**.

Think About It: March 28 marked the 20th anniversary of the formation of the super middleweight division, so to honor that occasion, here's THE RING's all-time top five at 168 pounds, based on a balance between ability and accomplishment at this weight: 1. Roy Jones (only stayed for two years and five defenses, but dominated James Toney in the biggest super middle bout ever); 2. Ottke (friendly decisions or not, two belts and 20 defenses and counting can't be ignored); 3. Calzaghe (it's all WBO, but has 14 defenses over a record 6½-year reign); 4. Chong Pal Park (first super middle king held two belts, made 10 defenses, and reigned for four years as the legit champ); 5. Chris Eubank (hard to pick between him and rivals Nigel Benn and Steve Collins, but 15 WBO defenses edge it). The next five: Benn, Collins, Toney, Ray Leonard, and Frankie Liles.

LONGEST-REIGNING TITLEHOLDERS

The graph below illustrates the game's most established titlists, along with the number of consecutive months each has held the title. The top five from last year are still the top five this year, but gone are last year's bottom two: Vassiliy Jirov, who was dethroned by James Toney, and Paul Spadafora, who vacated his lightweight belt to move up in weight. Interestingly, Bernard Hopkins just became the first to break 100 months since Ricardo Lopez reached that plateau in '99.



MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Talk about an impact player: Thanks to the impending arrival of **Oscar De La Hoya**, the middleweights went from boxing's coldest division to its hottest overnight. Seriously, this is how bad the middleweight class was: There wasn't one guy who stood as a real threat to champion **Bernard Hopkins**; prospect **Jermain Taylor**, who would have been a borderline top-10 candidate at this point in most divisions, was ranked sixth; and guys even hardcore fans had never heard of like **Sergey Tatevosyan**, **Evans Oure Ashira**, **Felix Sturm**, and **Raymond Joval** were cracking the rankings left and right. It's one thing to see names American fans don't recognize at strawweight, but at middleweight, it's a little bit ridiculous.

But those hard times are behind us now, and it's all thanks to "The Golden Boy." Unless Roy Jones and Mike Tyson sign to fight each other, Hopkins vs. De La Hoya will be the biggest fight in boxing in 2004, and not by a little. Meanwhile, those two superstars will make two nobodies, **Robert Allen** and Sturm, big players for a night (June 5, when Hopkins-Allen and De La Hoya-Sturm co-headline a pay-per-view event). And because of De La Hoya—who may or may not intend to take any more fights after he's made his $40-million or so for facing Sturm and Hopkins—every other name fighter within two weight classes will cast a long gaze at the middleweight division. You'll have **Felix Trinidad** coming back, **Shane Mosley** coming up, and maybe even Roy Jones coming down. Jones can't make 160, of course, but he'd chop off a few toes to make 168 if it would get him a fight with Oscar.

Some of the also-rans will get lost in the shuffle, but that's what happens when the superstars take over. For example, **Howard Eastman**, the one middleweight who's really

MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Bernard Hopkins

Best Boxer
Bernard Hopkins

Most Protected
Kelly Pavlik

Is He Still Around?
Gianfranco Rosi

Matchmaker's Dream
Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya

Deserves A Title Shot
Howard Eastman

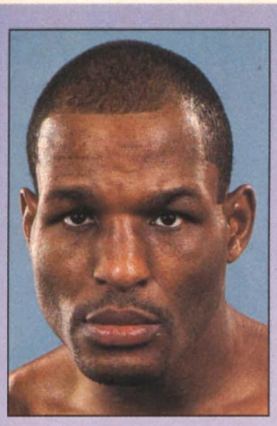
Most Fun To Watch
Bernard Hopkins

On The Way Down
William Joppy

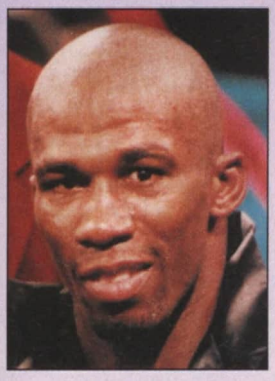
Underrated
David Lopez

Overrated
Aaron Mitchell

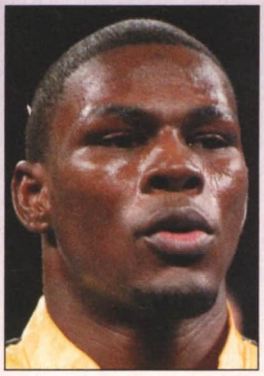
Best Fight In 2003
Daniel Edouard W 10
Miguel Espino



Bernard Hopkins



Robert Allen



Jermain Taylor

earned a title shot against Hopkins, will be a spectator to all the excitement. Taylor will have to put his title dreams on hold—which is probably a good thing for him, since he isn't ready for "The Executioner" yet anyway. And all that the Tatevosyans, Ashiras, and Jovals will be able to do is sit around wondering why Sturm and not them.

Think About It: Looking at all of the old-school eight weight classes, only one fighter holds his division's all-time records for each of the following: most consecutive title defenses, longest uninterrupted title reign, and quickest knockout victory in a title fight. That fighter is Hopkins, who broke Carlos Monzon's records for title defenses and length of reign, and set the quickest-kayo record when he bombed out Steve Frank in 24 seconds in 1996.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Even if you didn't pay much attention in your high school physics class, you probably remember this little nugget: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

While **Oscar De La Hoya's** impending weight gain could be the best thing to happen to the middleweights in quite a while, it could simultaneously deliver a staggering blow to the junior middleweights. "The Golden Boy" stayed at welterweight for four years and 12 fights, but his 154-pound stint is over after just 2½ years and four bouts. And not only will the weight class lose his star power, but because he tends to act as a star magnet, other top junior middles will probably follow him up.

With world champ **Winky Wright** and **Shane Mosley** contemplating moving up to middleweight, it's hard to say how things will look here in Oscar's wake. But let's take a best-case scenario, which means everyone but De La Hoya sticks around. Under that assumption, this is still an above-average division, full of credible, attractive challengers.

Fernando Vargas' status as a fan favorite has been well-established, although lingering back problems may mean the 26-year-old's career is prematurely winding down. Fortu-

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Shane Mosley

Best Boxer
Winky Wright

Most Protected
Matt Vanda

Is He Still Around?
Manning Galloway

Matchmaker's Dream
Winky Wright-Shane Mosley II

Deserves A Title Shot
Kassim Ouma

Most Fun To Watch
Fernando Vargas

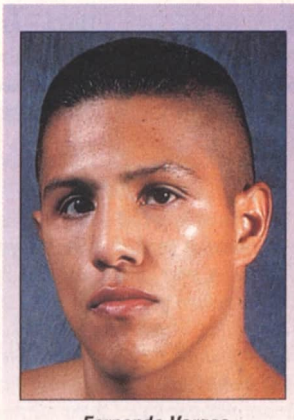
On The Way Down
Mehrdud Takaloo

Underrated
Verno Phillips

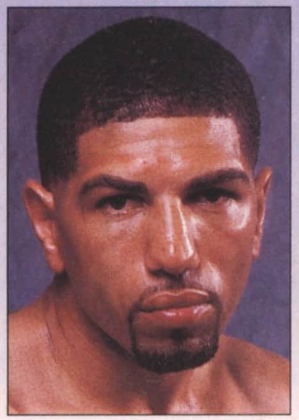
Overrated
Alejandro Garcia

Best Fight In 2003
Winky Wright W 12 J.C. Candelo

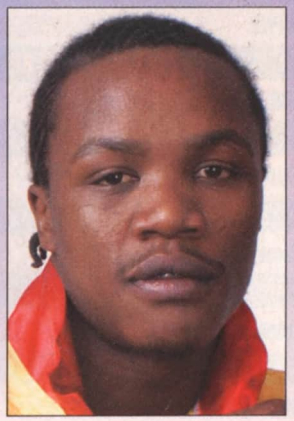
Oscar De La Hoya and Sugar Shane Mosley exchange lefts



Fernando Vargas



Winky Wright



Kassim Ouma

nately, the career of 25-year-old **Kassim Ouma** is rapidly on the rise following his breakthrough kayo of **J.C. Candelo** in January. Ouma is looking right now like the future of the division, but if it's not him, it could be wicked-hitting 27-year-old **Tokunbo Olajide**, who's suddenly back in the mix after becoming the first to kayo **Larry Marks**. Meanwhile, veterans **Verno Phillips, Javier Castillejo**, and **Daniel Santos** have all proven themselves as respectable opponents for anyone, and new additions like the undefeated **Travis Simms** and pared-down former middleweight titlist **Keith Holmes** could become players.

And we can't forget Mosley's good pal **Vernon Forrest**, who should be debuting at 154 pounds around the time this magazine hits the newsstands. When you add it all up, the junior middles are actually pretty deep and can probably afford to lose De La Hoya—as long as they don't lose too many other guys chasing green along the golden road.

Think About It: While Mosley snapped a three-fight winless streak by beating De La Hoya, he snapped an even longer streak when he took on Wright in March: a four-fight streak of fighting exclusively against 1992 U.S. Olympians. There were the two Forrest fights, followed by the no-contest with **Raul Marquez**, and then the repeat victory over the '92 team's only gold medalist, De La Hoya. No truth to the rumor that Mosley only agreed to take on Wright after he found out that Pepe Reilly was unavailable.

WELTERWEIGHTS

We warned you last year not to get too used to the idea of **Ricardo Mayorga** as your welterweight champion. From Shane Mosley beating Oscar De La Hoya in '00, to **Vernon Forrest** dethroning Mosley in '02, to Mayorga flattening Forrest in '03, upsets have been in the air at 147 pounds lately, and **Cory Spinks** kept the train rolling by outpointing the heavily favored Mayorga last December.

Wouldn't it be something if Spinks, with his paltry 32 percent kayo rate and uncanny ability to win without actually looking good, became the dominant champion this division has been lacking? Anything's possible, but it won't be easy for the St. Louis lefty. He was scheduled to face always dangerous **Zab Judah** after our press deadline, and if Spinks prevails there, a rematch with Mayorga is likely waiting on the other side. You have to say this for Spinks: Whether you like him or you think he's the most boring fighter since Henry Akinwande, you have to admit he shies away from no challenge.

WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Ricardo Mayorga

Best Boxer
Cory Spinks

Most Protected
Carlos Quintana

Is He Still Around?
Julio Cesar Chavez

Matchmaker's Dream
Ricardo Mayorga-Antonio Margarito

Deserves A Title Shot
Ricardo Mayorga

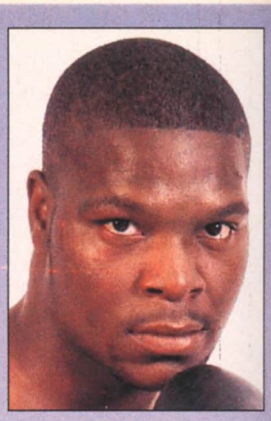
Most Fun To Watch
Antonio Margarito

On The Way Down
Ray Oliveira

Underrated
Manuel Gomez

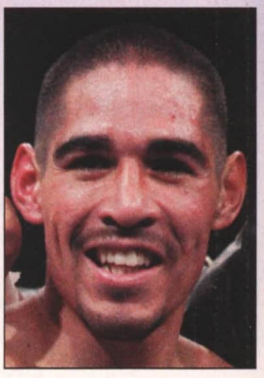
Overrated
Ishe Smith

Best Fight In 2003
Hector Quiroz KO 9 Antonio Diaz



Cory Spinks

Ricardo Mayorga

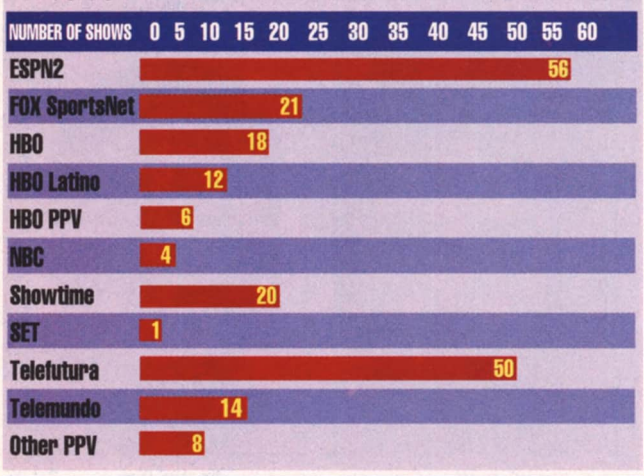


Antonio Margarito

And even if you do find Spinks dull, the good news is that there are other top welterweights who are not. The wild side of Mayorga has been well-documented, and "El Matador" is also a fairly safe bet for explosive action inside the ring. But, thanks mainly to the drab defensive battle that was Spinks-Mayorga, another welterweight has arguably edged past him in the consistent-entertainment category: **Antonio Margarito**. The Mex-

BOXING ON TV

Go ahead and keep ringing the death knell for boxing if you want, but the numbers tell a different story. Once again, the number of televised boxing cards has increased, from 197 in 2002, to 212 in 2003. Thanks in part to the addition of HBO Latino's ***Boxeo de Oro*** *and NBC's return to the fight game, we enjoyed an average of more than four boxing broadcasts per week. The trend may begin to reverse itself in '04, but for the moment, the news is good. Below is a breakdown of how much boxing each network provided in '03. ("Other PPV" refers to any pay-per-views that were not distributed by HBO PPV or SET.)*



ican, fresh off three straight second-round knockouts, is developing a definite buzz, one that's been building ever since his thrilling kayo of Antonio Diaz (the only man to score a legit win over Spinks in the pros) in March '02.

Add in all-action veterans like **Manuel "Shotgun" Gomez**, whose battle with **Jeffrey Hill** was by far the best one-round fight of '03, and **Teddy Reid**, whose slugfest with **Elio Ortiz** gave us four rounds of Gomez-Hill-like fury, and welterweight isn't a bad division at all. It's just a little bit "jinxed" at the top, that's all.

Think About It: For the first time in the last 13 "State Of The Game" issues, there are no welterweights to be found in the pound-for-pound top 10. Incredibly, every year from 1995-2003, there were at least *two* 147-pounders on the P4P list, and in '98, there were *three*: De La Hoya, Felix Trinidad, and Pernell Whitaker. But after both Forrest and Mayorga made the cut last year, there are no welters this year.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

The last time world junior welterweight champion **Kostya Tszyu** fought, Vernon Forrest was still undefeated, Wladimir

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Kostya Tszyu

Best Boxer
Sharmba Mitchell

Most Protected
Demetrius Hopkins

Is He Still Around?
Vince Phillips

Matchmaker's Dream
Floyd Mayweather-Arturo Gatti

Deserves A Title Shot
Sharmba Mitchell

Most Fun To Watch
Arturo Gatti

On The Way Down
Ben Tackie

Underrated
Lovemore Ndou

Overrated
Paul Spadafora

Best Fight In 2003
Arturo Gatti W 10 Micky Ward

was the better Klitschko, Tampa Bay and Oakland were a day away from qualifying for the Super Bowl, and *Joe Millionaire* was the hottest show on television. Don't expect *Tszyu Millionaire* to follow anytime soon, though; thanks to his tendon-tearing tendencies, Tszyu hasn't made a penny in the boxing ring since January 19, 2003.

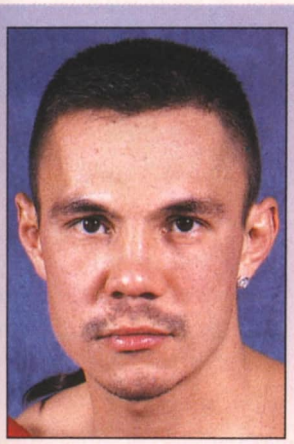
But life goes on at 140 pounds with the champ on the shelf—in fact, life is still pretty good in boxing's deepest division. While Tszyu has suffered a string of injuries, **Zab Judah** may be leaving the division for good, and Micky Ward has retired, others have been picking up the slack. Top contender **Sharmba Mitchell** has stayed busy in the face of the disappointment of having to twice postpone the Tszyu rematch. **Arturo Gatti** has emerged as one of the sport's most bankable ticket-sellers, having drawn a combined 23,880 fans to Atlantic City for his two fights there over the past 12 months. **Ricky Hatton** is Manchester, England's Gatti, and he's backing up his box office by taking on—and, so far, easily handling—real competition. And **Miguel Cotto** has continued to look like the best prospect in the boxing world while gradually stepping up his own comp.

But the real good news comes from below, as three top lightweights—including *the* top lightweight—are packing on five pounds and joining the party. If his legal situation doesn't end his career, **Paul Spadafora** should make at least a minor impact at 140, and **Leo Dorin** is set to enter junior welter with a bang in a sure-fire Fight of the Year candidate this summer against Gatti. But the biggest deal hitting 140 is **Floyd Mayweather**, who appears headed to a May debut and instant recognition as Tszyu's greatest threat. In fact, if a Tszyu-Mayweather fight ever comes off, don't be surprised to see the challenger favored to win.

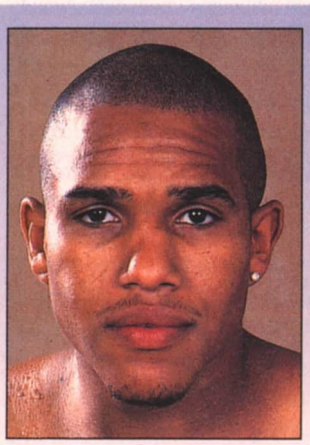
Think About It: In May, Tszyu will break Julio Cesar Chavez' record for the longest uninterrupted title reign in junior welterweight history, having held the WBC belt since August 21, 1999. But you may never find two reigns of the same length so dissimilar. In the four years, eight months, and 16 days between his WBC 140-pound title win over Roger Mayweather and his loss to Frankie Randall, Chavez fought 27 times—12 successful defenses, 14 non-title fights, and one challenge for the welterweight title. Tszyu, on the other hand, has fought just seven times, all of them title defenses, in the same amount of time. Looking at it from another numerical angle, "J.C. Superstar" fought every 64 days, on average, whereas Tszyu has fought every 246 days, on average. At his current pace, Tszyu would need to hold the title for 13 more years—by which time he'll be 47 years old—before he reaches the 27th fight of his reign.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

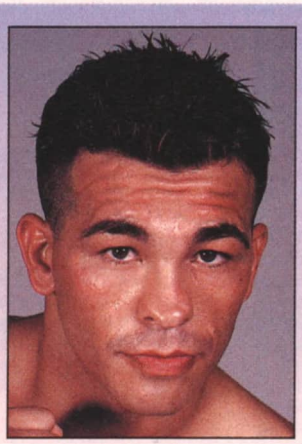
It isn't easy to lose the heart of your lineup and still field a team the fans want to come out and see. But the 3-4-5 hitters in this division over the last few years—in fact, the three alphabet beltholders as of one year ago—have all left or are about to leave (no, not to join the Yankees), and yet somehow lightweight remains



Kostya Tszyu



Sharmba Mitchell



Arturo Gatti

LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Juan Lazcano

Best Boxer
Floyd Mayweather

Most Protected
Acelino Freitas

Is He Still Around?
Eloy Rojas

Matchmaker's Dream
Juan Lazcano-
Jose Luis Castillo

Deserves A Title Shot
Juan Lazcano

Most Fun To Watch
Juan Diaz

On The Way Down
Steve Johnston

Underrated
Javier Jauregui

Overrated
Acelino Freitas

Best Fight In 2003
Leonard Dorin D 12
Paul Spadafora

a decent weight class. The bloody, entertaining draw between Paul Spadafora and Leonard Dorin turned out to be the last lightweight fight for both ex-titlists, and world champ **Floyd Mayweather** will probably be leaving the division and making waves at 140 shortly after you read this. No huge deal. The replacements are ready.

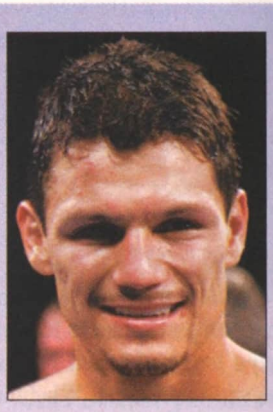
It all starts with **Juan Lazcano** and **Jose Luis Castillo**, clearly the top two contenders—an opinion that the WBC by some stroke of dumb luck agrees with. Jose Sulaiman's gang will pair "The Hispanic Causing Panic" against the Hispanic who panicked Mayweather, and assuming it's not a draw (which it very well could be with these closely matched warriors), we'll get a new RING champion out of it. That's great news for the division, because both guys make appealing fights and would bring honor to the championship.

One guy who sometimes makes appealing fights, and would surely be the biggest-name challenger for the Castillo-Lazcano winner, is **Acelino Freitas**. Yes, we've called Freitas "Overrated" and the "Most Protected" in the accompanying sidebar, but you can be overrated and protected and still be dangerous as hell. Freitas' management has hand-picked non-threatening foes for the past two years, and, in his stinker with **Artur Grigorian** and his life-and-death struggle with Jorge Barrios, he hasn't looked anything like the pound-for-pounder that some experts say he is. But, that being said, "Popo" could potentially take out Lazcano or Castillo with one punch or outspeed either man over 12 rounds.

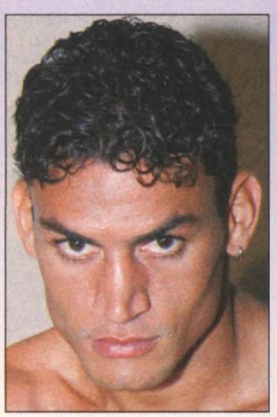
You don't have to tell **Javier Jauregui** about what Freitas is capable of—the Mexican vet was iced in one round by the Brazilian back in March '00. But "Chatito" has been on a career-best run recently, upsetting two top prospects in a row before outlasting **Leavander Johnson** for the vacant IBF title. Another veteran we shouldn't write off just yet is former lightweight king **Stevie Johnston**, and young fighters **Courtney Burton**, **Alex Trujillo**, and **Juan Diaz** give the division the depth to hopefully

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Floyd Mayweather overwhelms Phillip Ndou



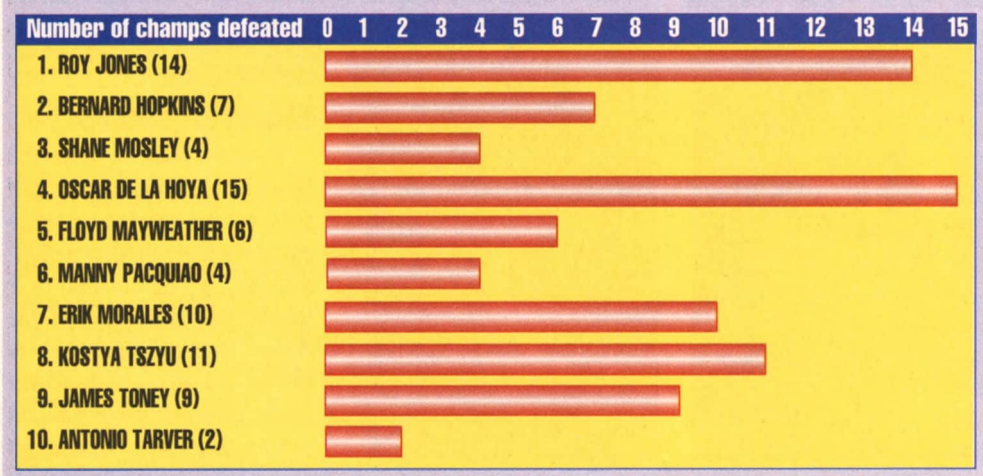
Juan Lazcano



Acelino Freitas

TITLISTS vs. TITLISTS

One of the ways to calculate a fighter's worth is to count the number of champions or titlists he's defeated. Here's how THE RING'S pound-for-pound top 10 stack up:



remain relevant even after the *next* heart of the order departs.

Think About It: Here's a peculiar little trend for you: Each of the last three IBF lightweight beltholders before Jauregui defended the title exactly eight times. First, Philip Holiday made seven successful defenses, then lost to Shane Mosley in his eighth. Mosley then made eight defenses (all by knockout, for what it's worth) before vacating the title. And Paul Spadafora followed suit by making eight defenses (the last a draw) before giving up the belt last year. Will Jauregui keep the streak alive? Considering his longest winning streak since 1996 is just four fights, the smart money says this trend is about to get bucked.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Morales-Corrales. Corrales-Morales. Put them in whichever order you like; these names were meant to be separated by a hyphen.

Thanks to a pair of entertaining wins in major fights on back-to-back weekends in February and March, **Erik Morales** and **Diego Corrales** are both a step closer to a showdown with a foe with a rhyming surname. Morales, a former featherweight and junior featherweight titlist, proved himself an elite 130-pounder by winning a unanimous decision over the impossibly gutsy **Jesus Chavez**, and one week later, Corrales reversed his upset loss last October to **Joel Casamayor** by scoring an upset win via split decision. A fight between the two would now crown a RING champ—and would be the most attractive pairing possible at junior lightweight.

At the same time, though, a rubber match between Corrales and Casamayor would also fill the world title vacancy, and that seems the more realistic next option since Top Rank has other opponents on deck for "El Terrible." It looks like he'll face fellow beltholder **Carlos Hernandez** sometime this summer, and after that, probably a rising featherweight such as Manny Pacquiao or Juan Manuel Marquez. As much as we'd like to see a rematch with Chavez, don't count on it; the Mexican-American fireplug could be out of action for up to a full year recuperating from the shoulder injury suffered in the Morales fight.

Although this division is undeniably top-heavy, there are still decent fighters in the lower half of the top 10. **Steve Forbes** remains one of the slickest spoilers in the game, Thailander **Yodsanan Nantha-chai** is unbeaten in his last 36 fights, and **Jorge Barrios** proved his worth by nearly dethroning then-number-one Acelino Freitas last August. And keep an eye on undefeated **"Mighty" Mike Anchondo**, who dominated **Goyo Vargas** last December.

Think About It: If you had told us in 2001 that a fighter with a record at the time of 8-7-1 (5) would be rated three years later, we would've asked which alphabet group was in charge of the bogus ratings. But in fact, the formerly .500-ish fighter in question, who has won 11 of his 12 fights since (including his last eight), is now ranked by THE RING at 130 pounds. With a record of 19-8-1 (12), **Orlando Salido** has the second-worst winning percentage of any fighter in our ratings (bantamweight Cruz Carbajal is about one percentage point lower), but his position at number nine in the world at junior lightweight is well-deserved following back-to-back 4-0 campaigns in '02 and '03.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Diego Corrales

Best Boxer
Erik Morales

Most Protected
Randy Suico

Is He Still Around?
Affif Djelti

Matchmaker's Dream
Diego Corrales-Erik Morales

Deserves A Title Shot
Joel Casamayor

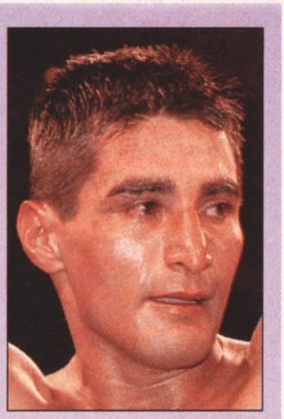
Most Fun To Watch
Erik Morales

On The Way Down
Guty Espadas

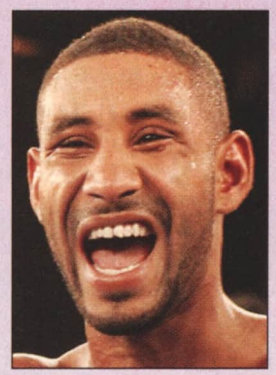
Underrated
Michael Gomez

Overrated
Boris Sinitsin

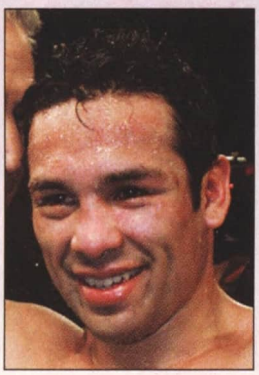
Best Fight In 2003
Acelino Freitas KO 12
Jorge Barrios



Erik Morales



Diego Corrales



Carlos Hernandez

FEATHERWEIGHTS

With the possible exception of the two bookend divisions—heavyweight and strawweight—no weight class has undergone as dramatic a facelift at the top since last year's "State Of The Game" as

FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Manny Pacquiao

Best Boxer
Juan Manuel Marquez

Most Protected
Zahir Raheem

Is He Still Around?
Harold Grey

Matchmaker's Dream
Manny Pacquiao-
Juan Manuel Marquez

Deserves A Title Shot
Juan Manuel Marquez

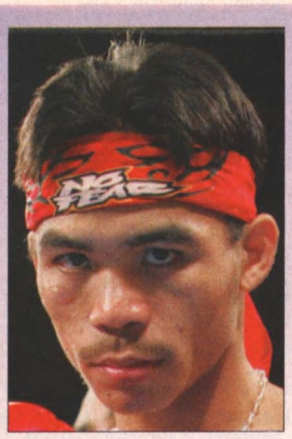
Most Fun To Watch
Manny Pacquiao

On The Way Down
Derrick Gainer

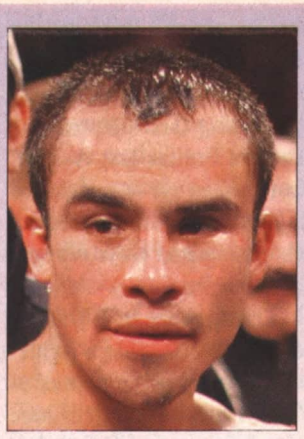
Underrated
In Jin Chi

Overrated
Takashi Koshimoto

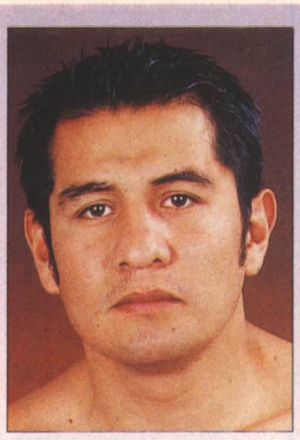
Best Fight In 2003
In Jin Chi D 12
Michael Brodie



Manny Pacquiao



Juan Manuel Marquez



Marco Antonio Barrera

featherweight has. One year ago, **Marco Antonio Barrera** was the 126-pound champ, and his top three contenders were Erik Morales, **Juan Manuel Marquez**, and Naseem Hamed. Now Morales is a junior lightweight, Hamed is reportedly a junior middleweight (and almost certainly a retired one, at that), and Barrera is a former champion who may be on his last legs. What a difference a year—and an ill-advised defense against the best young fighter in the world—makes.

Manny Pacquiao, clearly the best 25-or-under competitor in the sport, destroyed Barrera for the world title last November, delivering a near-flawless performance to rival Bernard Hopkins-Felix Trinidad, Floyd Mayweather-Diego Corrales, and any other dazzling, one-sided, elite-foe beatdown of recent years. "Pac-Man" instantly crashed the pound-for-pound ratings and, just as Barrera did when he beat Hamed, emerged as a star champion by dethroning a star champion.

And it looks like he'll give the same opportunity to his number-one contender in May, when the Filipino firecracker kicks off his two-fight HBO deal by taking on Marquez. It's the best fight that can be made at featherweight—a compelling clash of styles (a fast, aggressive southpaw puncher vs. a fast, countering boxer-puncher) that has a surprising number of experts picking the challenger to win (in a recent "Head To Head" poll in our sister magazine *KO*, Marquez received four out of four votes). Simply put, Pacquiao-Marquez should be great for boxing and for the featherweight division.

Meanwhile, the supporting cast at 126 is one of boxing's best, as it has been since the mid-'90s. Boxing fans will be eager to see how much Barrera has left, and the same goes for **Manuel Medina** (yet again). **Scott Harrison** and **Rocky Juarez** are both potential future champions, and whoever wins the **In Jin Chi-Michael Brodie** rematch will also remain in the mix in the new-look featherweight division.

Think About It: Were it not for James Toney, Pacquiao probably would have been the Fighter of the Year in 2003—and he would have been the first featherweight to win the honors in 22 years. The last was Salvador Sanchez, who shared THE RING'S Fighter of the Year award with Sugar Ray Leonard in 1981. Pacquiao also would have been the first Asian fighter (and, obviously, the first Filipino fighter) to ever win the award.

Michael Brodie attacks In Jin Chi in 2003's best feather fight

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

How do you solve a problem like Ayala? World junior featherweight champion **Paulie Ayala** was very deserving of the RING title when he dominated Bones Adams in their February '02 rematch, but here we are, more than two years later, and Ayala still hasn't defended his belt. Not once. And the latest talk is that his next fight will be at featherweight against Marco Antonio Barrera, his third consecutive contest at 126 pounds.

There's been a hue and cry from fans and boxing writers alike demanding that Ayala be stripped of his title. THE RING, however, will not stoop to the alphabet gangs' level and begin yanking titles away from fighters, because once you start, as the sanctioning bodies have

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Joan Guzman

Best Boxer
Oscar Larios

Most Protected
Jose Aguiniga

Is He Still Around?
Arthur Johnson

Matchmaker's Dream
Paulie Ayala-Oscar Larios

Deserves A Title Shot
Oscar Larios

Most Fun To Watch
Joan Guzman

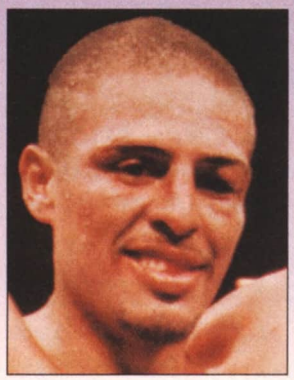
On The Way Down
Agapito Sanchez

Underrated
Art Simonyan

Overrated
Somsak Sithchatchawal

Best Fight In 2003
Oscar Larios W 12
Shigeru Nakazato

Paulie Ayala



Oscar Larios

proven, you may not know where to stop. So we're leaving it up to the fighter, and being the honest men that they are, Ayala and manager Scott Sherman may well vacate the title soon and make the move up to featherweight official.

Until then, though, someone will have to beat Ayala at 122 pounds to relieve him of the world title—and at the moment, there are two fighters who look very capable. There's the guy who's been paying his dues for quite a while, **Oscar Larios**, who's fought four times in each of the last three years to establish himself as the junior feather version of Sven Ottke (minus the reliance on friendly officiating). And there's the explosive relative newcomer, **Joan Guzman**, who massacred highly respected veteran **Agapito Sanchez** in February to justify his "Little Tyson" nickname. Both Larios and Guzman are threats to the lighter-hitting Ayala, and should the Texan abdicate, we'd love to see a clash between the two Golden Boy-promoted gladiators for the vacant title.

The rest of the 122-pound class appears to be a level below, talent-wise. France's **Mahyar Monshipour** is just the latest in a long line of unproven WBA titlists (he's the eighth fighter to hold the belt in the last six years). **Jose Luis Valbuena** and **Israel Vazquez** are both highly competent, but have generally come up short against the elite. Same goes for **Jorge Lacierva**. If there's one lower-ranked fighter to keep an eye on, it's **Nedal Hussein**, who gave Manny Pacquiao the fight of his life a few years ago.

Think About It: How big of a puncher is prospect **Daniel Ponce-DeLeon**? He has 17 knockouts in 17 fights, including 10 within the first two rounds—which is not that uncommon when a fighter is facing total stiffs, but Ponce-DeLeon hasn't been. He took out **Trinidad Mendoza** in two rounds; in his next fight, Mendoza went the full 12 rounds with Danny Romero, and in his previous two, he lasted the distance with Ricardo Vargas and Heriberto Ruiz. Ponce-DeLeon also destroyed **Jesus Perez** in one round; Perez lasted six rounds with a prime Tim Austin and, just prior to getting iced by Ponce-DeLeon, went the distance with Pete Frissina. It's too soon to call this 2000 Mexican Olympian the best puncher in the division, but Guzman should definitely be looking over his shoulder.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

What was number-one rated bantamweight **Rafael Marquez'** greatest victory in the past 12 months? Well, it wasn't his win over blown-up junior bantam (and one-time junior fly) **Mauricio Pastrana**, in which he suddenly turned semi-boring and boxed his way to a closer win than we expected going in. And it wasn't his kayo of **Pete Frissina**, in which Marquez did look undeniably magnificent, but did so against someone we told you on these pages last year was the most overrated fighter in the division. Marquez' greatest victory actually came in a fight he had nothing to do with, when Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson upset Fernando Montiel at 115 pounds last August. Johnson proved he was not a washed-up fighter after all, making Marquez' two wins over him, one by decision and one by emphatic knockout, that much more impressive. Add in wins over previously unbeaten **Tim Austin**, followed by Pastrana and Frissina, and there is no denying that Marquez is the man to beat at 118 pounds.

Marquez is not the longest-reigning titlist in this division, however. That distinction belongs to Thailand's **Veerapol Sahaprom**, who has reigned for 5½ years and has made 12 defenses of the WBC title. Incredibly, four of those defenses have come against the same

BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Rafael Marquez

Best Boxer
Rafael Marquez

Most Protected
Chatchai Sasakul

Is He Still Around?
Leo Gamez

Matchmaker's Dream
Rafael Marquez-
Veerapol Sahaprom

Deserves A Title Shot
Genaro Garcia

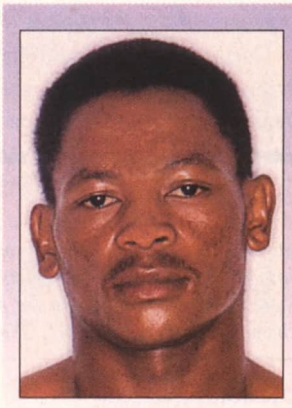
Most Fun To Watch
Cruz Carbajal

On The Way Down
Hugo Dianzo

Underrated
Silence Mabuza

Overrated
Poonsawat Kratingdaengym

Best Fight In 2003
Veerapol Sahaprom D 12
Toshiaki Nishioka



Silence Mabuza

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Rafael Marquez cracks Mauricio Pastrana with a right

fighter: **Toshiaki Nishioka**, of whom Veerapol finally ridded himself in March with a clear-cut points win. Their previous three encounters were a controversial decision for Veerapol and two draws—which should explain why Marquez is ranked above the Thailander.

Below the top two, this is not boxing's most glamorous division, although we would love to see WBO beltholder **Cruz Carbajal** in there with Marquez in an all-Mexican showdown. Don't let Carbajal's 11 losses fool you; "Chucho" is fighting better than ever at age 29 and would be a very live underdog against Marquez. And there are other countrymen who could potentially threaten Marquez in this Mexican-heavy division (five of the top 10 fighters hail from Mexico), including **Genaro Garcia**, who starched Marquez in two rounds less than four years ago.

Outside of Mexico and the Orient, the best fighters are Danish veteran **Johnny Bredahl**, South Africa's **Silence Mabuza**, and Panama's **Mauricio Martinez**. Notice there aren't any Americans among the bunch. And there might not be anytime soon, if the ordinary-looking **Clarence Vinson** is the United States' best bantam prospect.

Think About It: If Tim Austin, who is 33 years old and facing a rape accusation and possible jail time, never fights again, does he have a shot at making the Hall of Fame? He only lost once in his career and made nine defenses over a 5½-year alphabet title reign, during which he was generally recognized as the best bantamweight in the world. At the same time, though, he doesn't have a single win over an opponent who is likely to get his name on the Hall of Fame ballot, or over a fighter who was ever considered a pound-for-pounder. It seems like a long-shot, but consider this: Austin's resume doesn't look so different from that of Jeff Chandler (who also made nine successful 118-pound title defenses), and Chandler, after quite a few years on the ballot, was finally inducted in 2000. So maybe, 10 or 15 years after he retires, Austin will sneak in. That appears to be about the best he can hope for.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

How's this for a comeback: You lose two fights in a row—your first two losses in more than a decade—and then, at age 32, rise from the ashes and defeat two unbeaten, RING-rated fighters back-to-back. We all assumed **Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson** was washed-up after his twin defeats at the hands of Rafael Marquez in '01 and '02, but the former 112- and 115-pound titlist took 16 months off, dropped back down from bantam to junior bantam, and now looks almost as magnificent as he did in his pound-for-pound prime. His win over highly touted **Fernando Montiel** was totally unexpected, and he looked nothing short of spectacular scoring a fourth-round kayo over the 38-0 **Luis Bolano**. As a result, he's infused excitement into a division that's been lacking a name presence since ... well, since Johnson gave up the IBF title in 2000.

But Too Sharp isn't the only one creating a buzz at junior bantam. With his two entertaining wins over **Felix Machado** in '03, **Luis Perez** has built himself up to the point where his name was the one Johnson called out following the Bolano fight. With Johnson hailing from Washington, D.C., and Perez' first fight with Machado having taken place in the nation's capital, a Johnson-Perez showdown in D.C. might be the biggest fight the 115-pound class has seen since Johnny Tapia vs. Danny Romero seven years ago.

Meanwhile, outside the

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Alexander Munoz

Best Boxer
Mark Johnson

Most Protected
Pramuansak Phosuwan

Is He Still Around?
Jesus Rojas

Matchmaker's Dream
Mark Johnson-Luis Perez

Deserves A Title Shot
Martin Castillo

Most Fun To Watch
Luis Perez

On The Way Down
Felix Machado

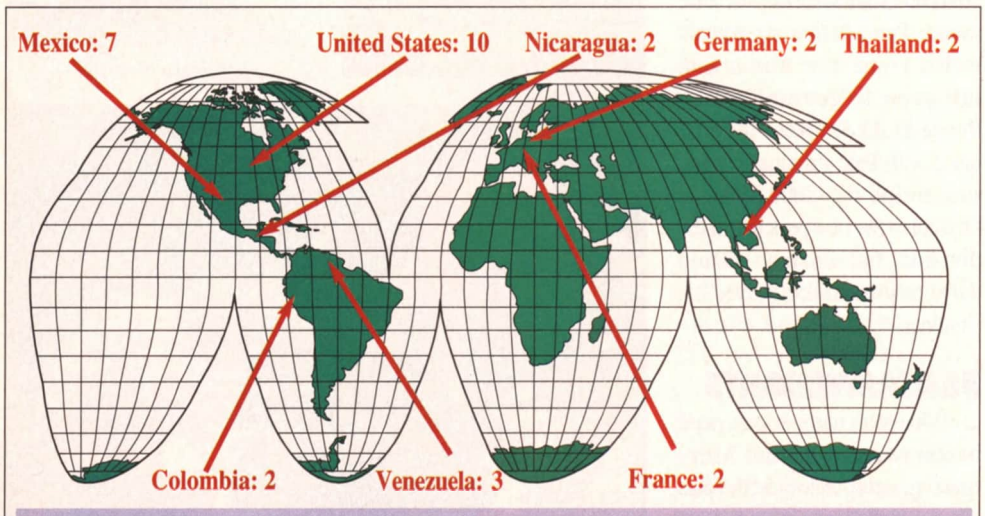
Underrated
Oscar Andrade

Overrated
Vernie Torres

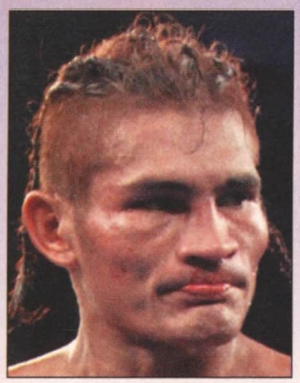
Best Fight In 2003
Luis Perez W 12
Felix Machado (first fight)

THE CHAMPS AND TITLISTS BY COUNTRIES

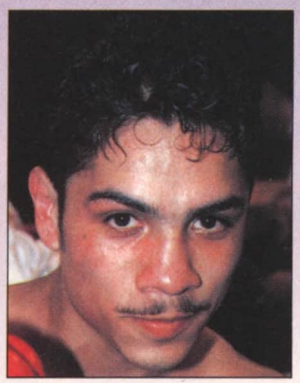
Because THE RING is taking a stand and refusing to recognize multiple WBA or WBC "champions" in the same division (for example, we recognize WBA "super" champ Cory Spinks at welter, but not "regular" titlist Jose Rivera), there are less titlists on this chart than in past years. But the theme is still the same: The United States' grip is slipping. On the positive side for America, though, of its 10 beltholders, six are real RING champs. (Totals as March 11, 2004)



Seven countries tied with 1: •Australia •Denmark •Guyana •Italy •Japan •North Korea •Philippines



Luis Perez



Martin Castillo

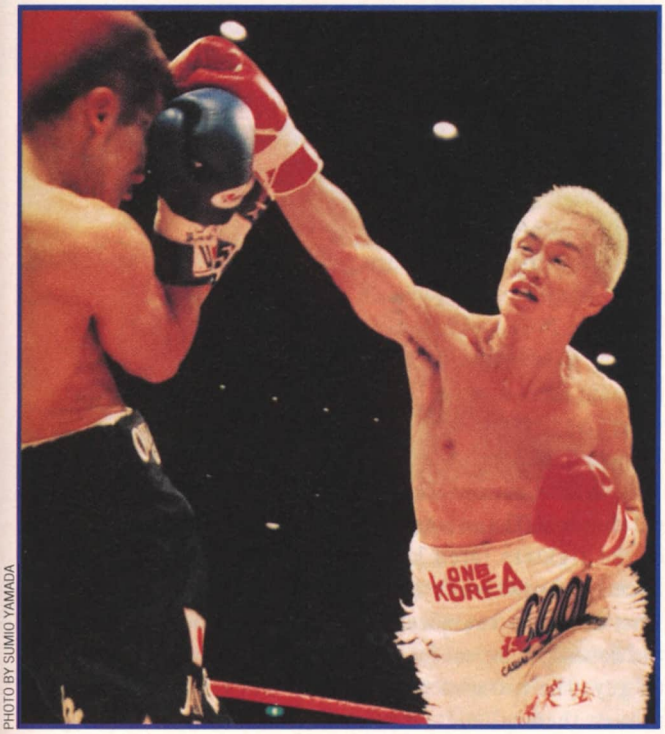


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Masamori Tokuyama fires a right at Katsushige Kawashima

sightlines of American fans, beltholders **Masamori Tokuyama** and **Alexander Munoz** are continuing to rack up defenses, and they even headlined a twin bill together in January in Japan. Perhaps they could do for the division in Osaka what Johnson and Perez could do for it in D.C.

There are appealing up-and-comers here as well, including the comebacking Montiel, **Martin Castillo**, and 2000 U.S. Olympian **Jose Navarro**. And speaking of U.S. Olympians, former fly titlist **Eric Morel** should be invading this division soon, adding another name presence to a weight class that suddenly isn't so sorely in need of them anymore.

Think About It: Joe Louis' 25 consecutive successful title defenses is often thought of as boxing's most unbreakable record, but 1940s light heavyweight Billy Fox's record for most consecutive knockouts at the start of a career is proving every bit as elusive. Munoz was the latest to make a go at it, winning his first 23 inside the distance, but **Hidenobu Honda** did Fox a favor and spoiled the Venezuelan's streak by extending him the full 12 last October.

FLYWEIGHTS

American fans generally don't care about 112-pound fighters, so it's up to those fighters to *make* the fans care. The best possible way to do that is to have an important fight on American TV. And that's exactly what **Eric Morel** and **Irene Pacheco** were planning to do last May in a Showtime fight that might have made this a breakthrough year for the flyweights. The bout would have crowned a RING champion, and the entire boxing world would have been watching. It was perfect.

So, naturally, the deal fell apart, the fight never happened, the only televised fights either guy had all year were on pay-per-view, and, to make matters worse, Morel got bumped off by an unknown in December.

That unknown was Venezuela's **Lorenzo Parra**, the only real bright spot in the division in the past 12 months. Other than reading his name in THE RING ratings, you'd probably never heard of Parra before he upended Morel, and even now, he remains largely anonymous because that upset win was part of a PPV event hardly anyone saw. But Parra is an undefeated 26-year-old who can box (he outboxed Morel, after all) and punch (17 kayos in 22 fights), so he may eventually help us get over the disappointment of Morel-Pacheco not happening.

As for Morel, whose only

FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Lorenzo Parra

Best Boxer
Lorenzo Parra

Most Protected
Hiroshi Nakano

Is He Still Around?
Salvatore Fanni

Matchmaker's Dream
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam-Lorenzo Parra

Deserves A Title Shot
Mzukisi Sikali

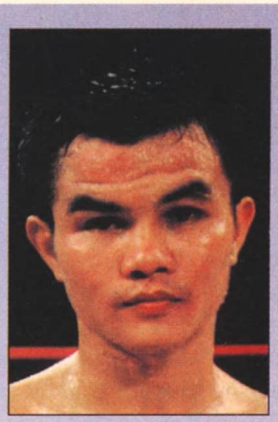
Most Fun To Watch
Pongsaklek Wonjongkam

On The Way Down
Hawk Makepula

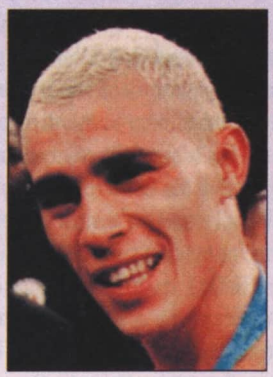
Underrated
Christophe Rodrigues

Overrated
Luis Maldonado

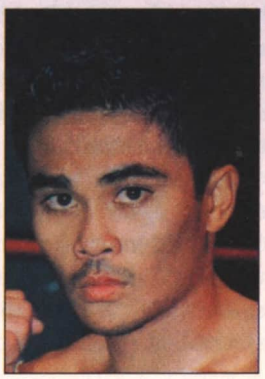
Best Fight In 2003
Eric Morel W 12
Isidro Garcia



Pongsaklek Wonjongkam



Brahim Asloum



Brian Viloria

other fight in the past year was another barely seen PPV bout with **Isidro Garcia**, his fine run at flyweight appears now to be done. "Little Hands Of Steel" will probably officially be a junior bantam by the time you read this. Pacheco, on the other hand, is still a flyweight, but not one who's making any sort of an impact. "Mambaco" fought just once in '03 (same as in '02 and '01), and it was an off-TV win in Colombia over **Damaen Kelly**.

Speaking of off-TV, Thailand's **Pongsaklek Wongjongkam** is quite deservedly the number-one man in the division now, but it's not exactly encouraging that his last five title fights have all gone the distance (after none of his first five did).

Ending on a positive note, however, you'll see that Parra isn't the only unbeaten fighter in THE RING's rankings. **Omar Narvaez**, **Vic Darchinyan**, and Olympic gold medalist **Brahim Asloum** all show promise, and lurking just outside the top 10, **Brian Viloria**, though inconsistent, is still undefeated.

Think About It: You would assume any fighter who goes 0-4-1 over a 12-month span isn't much of a fighter, but **Juan Keb-Baas**, who ran up that winless streak between February '03 and February '04, is definitely better than his recent success rate suggests. His five opponents—whom Keb-Baas took on in three different weight classes—had a combined record of 97-10-3 and included two undefeated fighters and a major titleholder, yet the 35-year-old Mexican surrendered easily to none of them. Also, Keb-Baas' last three losses before this tough-luck streak began all came against former or current titleholders, including a decision to Victor Burgos that was generally regarded as a robbery.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

It would be nice if we could call world champion **Rosendo Alvarez** something catchy like "Resounding Rosendo," but we can't. Nearing his 34th birthday, there's nothing resounding about Alvarez' victories or title defenses anymore. Once a borderline pound-for-pounder who gave Ricardo Lopez the two toughest fights of his life, Alvarez is now just a crafty, game old vet who convinces his body to do enough to barely get by.

At least that's what he's done in his last two fights, a decision win over rival **Beibis Mendoza** that, like their previous fight, could have gone either way, and a draw with **Victor Burgos** in a fight Alvarez was favored to win. We probably should be glad we have a 108-pound RING champion at all—there isn't another RING king below 122—but still, Alvarez' days of dominance appear to be over.

Unfortunately, the man best positioned to take his place, top contender **Jorge Arce**, really has no business fighting in this division. "Travieso" is hardly any closer to being a natural junior fly than James Toney is, but he sweats himself down (to the point of passing out at the weigh-in two fights ago) to get a size and strength advantage. It's anybody's guess how much longer the 24-year-old Mexican is going to be able to do it, but it would seem a move to flyweight can't be far off.

And that would leave the 108-pounders as one heck of an old division. The average age of the fighters rated below Arce is 32—which is somewhat old for a heavyweight, and downright ancient for a little guy. The two men who've proven themselves to be in Alvarez' league, Mendoza and Burgos, are relative youngsters at 29 and 30, respectively. You'd have to figure, though, that contenders **Yosam Choi** (32), **Nelson Dieppa** (33), **Kermin Guardia** (34), **Melchor Cob-Castro** (36), and **Fahlan Sakkreerin** (36) don't have too many great fights left in them.

Think About It: As you might expect, junior fly is not a division with a storied history of American dominance—Joey Olivo, Michael Carbajal, and Will Grigsby are the only American titlists in the 29-year existence of the weight class—but the absence of Americans at the moment is nevertheless jaw-dropping. There are no fighters from the U.S. anywhere in THE RING's rankings or in any of the alphabet boys' rankings, and on the Web site boxrec.com, which ranks every fighter in the world using a computerized system, you have

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Jorge Arce

Best Boxer
Rosendo Alvarez

Most Protected
Marvin Tampus

Is He Still Around?
Rafael Orozco

Matchmaker's Dream
Rosendo Alvarez-Jorge Arce

Deserves A Title Shot
Jorge Arce

Most Fun To Watch
Rosendo Alvarez

On The Way Down
Yosam Choi

Underrated
Ulises Solis

Overrated
Roberto Vasquez

Best Fight In 2003
Rosendo Alvarez D 12
Victor Burgos

WHAT'S IN, WHAT'S OUT

IN	OUT
Tito	Lennox
James Toney	Jackie Kallen
Superstars promoting	Superstars fighting
Mark Johnson	Kirk Johnson
Kassim	Hasim
Hopkins at 39	Holyfield at 41
Peter Manfredo	Angel Manfredy
"The Little Tyson"	The big Tyson
Verno Phillips	Vince Phillips
The Gatti-Ward trilogy	The Chavez-Randall trilogy

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Rosendo Alvarez eats a Victor Burgos right hand

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Melchor Cob-Castro and bloody Jorge Arce battle

to scroll down to number 154 (as of press time) to find a 108-pounder who fights out of America. That fighter is the Peruvian-born, Cincinnati, Ohio-based **Ruben Poma**.

STRAWWEIGHTS

If you're willing to count "interim" belts and WBO straps, then every single fighter rated at 105 pounds is a current or former titleholder. But that doesn't necessarily mean the depth of proven talent here is all that exceptional; it might just be a striking comment on the parity that has allowed the titles to be passed around so much. And considering that you could argue that none of these guys has cracked the pound-for-pound top 50, we tend to lean toward the latter explanation.

The current titleholders include **Noel Arambulet** of Venezuela, presently in his second reign as WBA titleholder; **Eagle Akakura** of Japan, who won the WBC title via major upset over **Jose Aguirre** in just his 12th pro fight; and **Daniel Reyes** of Colombia, who brutalized **Edgar Cardenas** for the IBF belt last October. There's also WBO titlist **Ivan Calderon**, the slick, undefeated Puerto Rican Olympian who, though extremely unproven, may be the most talented man in the division. And don't forget the all-important WBA "interim champ" (does it get much more meaningless than this?), **Juan Landaeta** of Venezuela.

The other five spots are taken by ex-titlists: Mexico's Aguirre and **Roberto Leyva**, Japan's **Yutaka Niida** and **Keitaro Hoshino**, and **Chana Porpaoin** of Thailand.

STRAWWEIGHT

Best Puncher
Daniel Reyes

Best Boxer
Ivan Calderon

Most Protected
Eriberto Gejon

Is He Still Around?
Lee Sandoval

Matchmaker's Dream
Noel Arambulet-
Eagle Akakura

Deserves A Title Shot
Jose Aguirre

Most Fun To Watch
Roberto Leyva

On The Way Down
Chana Porpaoin

Underrated
Juan Palacios

Overrated
Muhammad Rachman

Best Fight In 2003
Jose Aguirre KO 12
Keitaro Hoshino

Still not sure whether it's deep talent or deep parity? This may make things a little more clear: Three years ago, Reyes lost to Leyva for the vacant IBF title. Leyva promptly lost the belt to Miguel Barrera, who lost the belt last May on a career-ending one-punch upset kayo against Cardenas, who then got splattered by Reyes, bringing the whole ridiculous round robin full-circle. And tracking the

Yutaka Niida

WBA title is twice as confusing, as it's changed hands seven times in the last five years, and Hoshino and Arambulet have both reigned twice in that stretch.

Anybody else miss Ricardo Lopez?

Think About It: Hey, Lennox, pay attention: Niida, unable to leave well enough alone, returned to boxing last July after a two-year retirement, and promptly spoiled his undefeated record by losing a split decision to Arambulet in a bid to get his old title back. Of course, Niida was probably foolish to retire in the first place at age 23, but the fact remains that comebacks from retirements turn out badly far more often than they turn out well. If Lewis comes back in two years and goes straight to a title fight, like Niida did, he'll probably be lucky to come away with just a split decision loss. ■

Eagle Akakura rips Jose Aguirre with a right

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April 1987: Hagler-Leonard Souvenir Issue. Plus: Czyz, Orlando Canizales, Mugabi-Thomas, Biggs-Snipes, Chavez-LaPorte, Bonecrusher-Witherspoon II, Haugen-Paul.

May 1987: Mike Tyson: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, The Ring annual ratings, Louie Espinoza, Herol Graham.

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July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

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Aug. 1990: Chavez: His Greatness Confirmed ... Is He The Best Mexican Fighter Ever? Plus: Matthew Saad Muhammad, John L. Sullivan & Mike Tyson, Michael Nunn, Mark Breland, Harold Johnson, Cus D'Amato, Louis-Godoy (color).

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Dec. 1990: Exclusive Annual Report: The State Of The Game. Plus: Douglas-Holyfield preview, Julio Cesar Chavez, Joe Grim, Whitaker-Nazario, Rosi-Van Horn, Benny Leonard, Douglas-Tyson (color).

Jan. 1991: Boxing's Baddest Bad Boy: Nigel Benn Plays By His Own Rules. Plus: Roberto Duran, Kid Akeem, Jose Napoles, Jimmy Carruthers, LaMotta-Zale, Dempsey-Willard (color).

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April 1991: Julio Cesar Chavez—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Tyson-Stewart, James Leija, Wilfred Benitez, Pedro Decima, Moore-Bassey.

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Aug. 1991: Foreman Gives Holyfield A Fight ... And The World A Thrill (color). Plus: Making weight, Harry Greb, Kevin Kelley, Louis-Conn I, Simon Brown-Blocker, Chavez-Duplessis, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Oct. 1991: A Hit Again—How Far Can Thomas Hearns Go? Plus: Battling Levinsky, Oba Carr, Dave McAuley, Muhammad Ali, Lou Ambers, Luther McCarty, ethnic matchups, computer light heavy tournament, Cerdan-Hagler, Rocky Marciano (color).

Dec. 1991: Evander Holyfield vs. Mike Tyson: Who Will Win And Why. Plus: Eddie Aliano, Jack Britton, Muhammad Ali, Pernell Whitaker, rating the 44 world champions, Marcel Cerdan, Henry Cooper, Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott (color).

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May 1993: Oscar De La Hoya's Sprint To The Title: Is He Good Enough *Now?* Plus: Carbajal-Gonzalez preview, Lennox Lewis, The Ring Poll, Freddie Pendleton.

Aug. 1994: Bowe's Back! Determined To Do It Again. Plus: Eric Griffin, Pernell Whitaker, Ray Mercer, Roger Donoghue, State of the Game (midterm report), All-Time Top 10: The Philippines.

Dec. 1994: Fighting-Mad! James Toney Just Wants To Beat People Up. Plus: Duran & Robinson, Don King, Mike McCallum, injuries (part II), Tom Molineaux.

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Jan. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Trinidad's Destiny: Jones Is On His Mind ... But Vargas Is In His Face! Plus: Naseem Hamed, Tszyu-Judah, Evander Holyfield, Willie Bean, 20 greatest middleweights.

Feb. 2001: It's Not Over For Oscar: The Ring's Five-Step Recovery Plan. Plus: Bob Arum, Dingaan Thobela, Hernandez brothers, U.S. Olympic team, future pound-for-pounders.

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May 2001 (108-Page Extra): Felix Trinidad—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Barrera-Hamed preview, Bernard Hopkins, Joey Archer.

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Aug. 2001: Rocking The World! What Rahman's Victory Means To Boxing. Plus: Barrera-Hamed, Oscar De La Hoya, Mount Whitaker, *Friday Night Fights.*

Sept. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Ring Interview—Hasim Rahman: "Nobody's Taking My Titles!" Plus: 20 all-time greatest lightweights, Pat Valentino, Hopkins & King, Jones & Arum.

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Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

Jan. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Oscar Feeds His Critics: Did He Chicken Out Against Vargas? Plus: Wladimir Klitschko, Chris Byrd, 20 greatest feather-weights, "Caveman" Bob Moha.

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June 2002: Lennox Lewis: I'll End The Tyson "Freak Show!" Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Freitas-Casamayor, De La Hoya & Vargas, Hagler & Leonard.

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March 2003 (108-Page Extra): Hamed ... Morales ... Tapia: Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame. Also: Joe Mesi, Ricardo Lopez, Pipino Cuevas, alphabet tales, what's ahead for '03.

April 2003: Gatti Has His Ducks In A Row: A New Woman And A New Trainer Put The "Art" Back In Arturo. *Also: Barrera-Morales, Roy Jones, Phillip Ndou & Silence Mabuza, Laila Ali, Gorilla Jones,*

May 2003 (108-Page Extra): Ali ... Leonard ... Tyson ... Klitschko? Also: Year-end awards, Chris Byrd, Lupe Pintor, Maxie Rosenbloom.

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March 2004 (108-Page Extra): Audley Harrison, Dominick Guinn, Joe Mesi: Who Will Be The Next Star Heavyweight? Also: Floyd Mayweather, Arturo Gatti, Erik Morales, what's ahead for 2004.

April 2004: Antonio Tarver: "It's Not About Roy Jones Anymore." Also: Pacquiao-Barrera, Floyd Mayweather, all punch/no chin, Rinty Monaghan.

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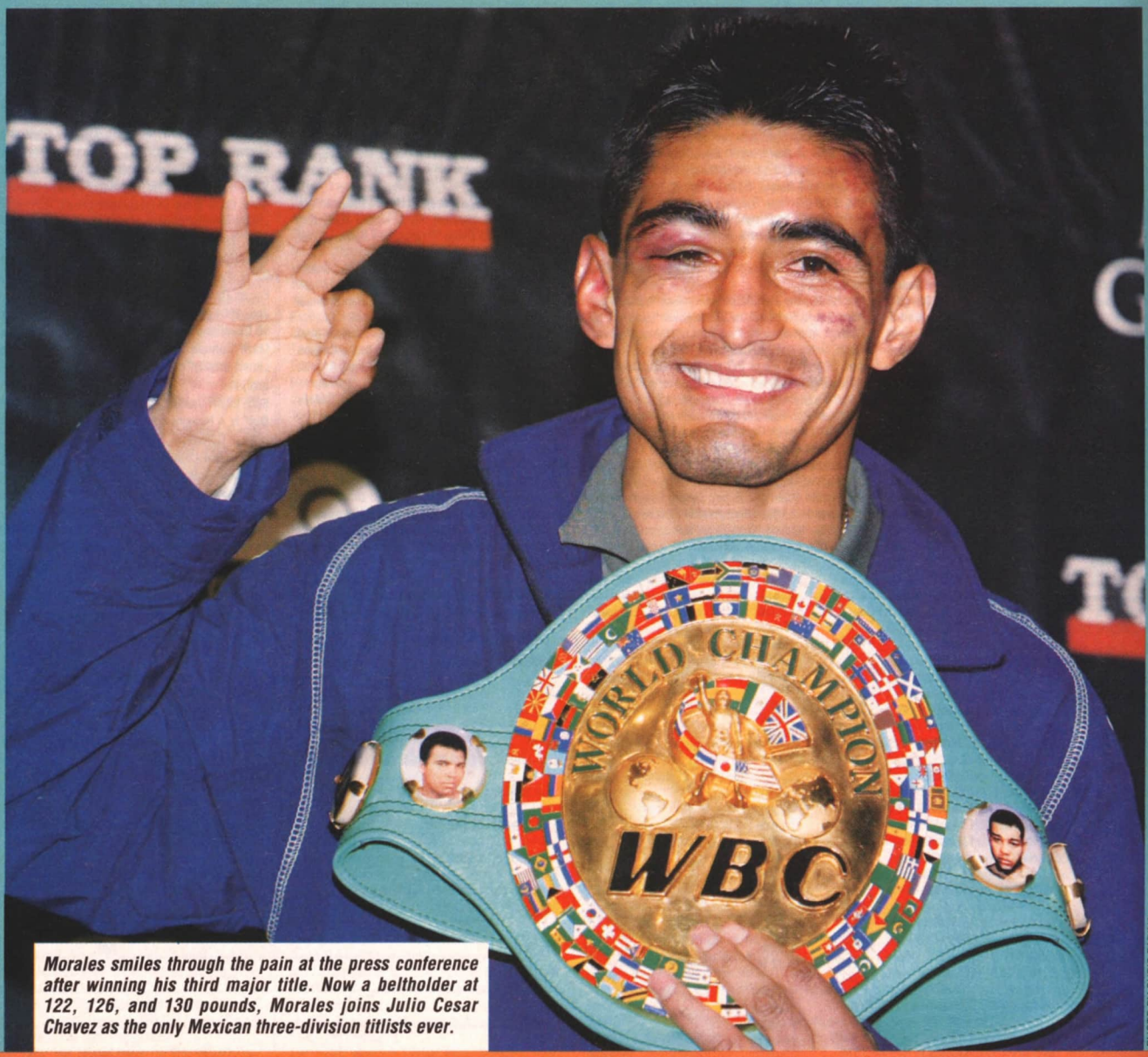
THREE-DIVISION TITLIST

ERIK MORALES

At 130, He Can't Afford To Be Overconfident



Morales smiles through the pain at the press conference after winning his third major title. Now a beltholder at 122, 126, and 130 pounds, Morales joins Julio Cesar Chavez as the only Mexican three-division titlists ever.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

By Paul Salgado

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales slips a left from Jesus Chavez and scores with a right hand en route to a grueling unanimous decision win. Many are interpreting his intense struggle to defeat Chavez as an indicator that Morales will find the junior lightweight class rougher than the two smaller divisions he has ruled.

History tells us overconfidence is dangerous for any athlete, and the sport of boxing is particularly instructive in this regard. If you think about it, it's been downright perilous to stand among THE RING'S pound-for-pound entrants over the past year or so and face an opponent you expect to beat. Since last June, when Vitali Klitschko nearly unseated Lennox Lewis and sent him packing for the tranquility of retirement, there have been several fights to remind boxing's current crop of immortals that they really are just flesh and blood after all.

Last November, Roy Jones, arguably the greatest fighter of this generation, took frightful punishment as he rope-a-doped his way to a razor-thin majority decision over Antonio Tarver. Then, only one week later, Marco Antonio Barrera absorbed a methodical pounding from Manny Pacquiao, before suffering an 11th-round stoppage that convinced both fans and experts alike that his days of competing at the game's highest level are likely over. And the next month, Ricardo Mayorga fell from the pound-for-pound list when unheralded Cory Spinks negated his offense over 12 frustrating rounds.

It took a blistering right hand-left hook combination from Jesus Chavez to remind Erik Morales—another pound-for-pounder—just how dangerous underestimating your opponent can be, especially if he's a natural 130-pounder and you're not. The sequence of punches buckled Morales' knees and sent him sagging into the ropes a mere 1:35 into the opening round of Chavez' first defense of his super featherweight title, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. Meanwhile, the crowd of 8,092 roared in disbelief as Chavez, a 3-1 underdog, instinctively pounced all over Morales, ripping another right hand to his chin and wielding hooks to his ribcage.

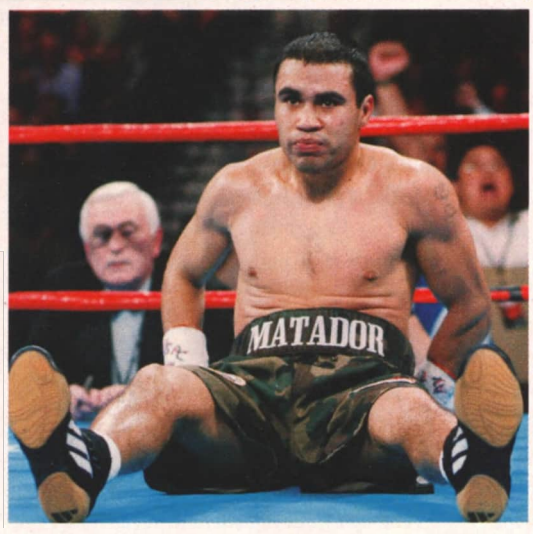
The round was framed in the sort of irony often conjured in boxing. In the days preceding the bout, scribes were hard-pressed to find an angle worthy of interest, given the believed foregone outcome. Morales was simply assumed to be that good. There was much ado about the 27-year-old Mexican, who already had held titles at 122 and 126 pounds, making a run at a third divisional title to equal a feat of Julio Cesar Chavez—the Patron Saint of Mexican prize fighters. Only Dean Juipe of the *Las Vegas Sun* took a different tack, pointing to a potential Achilles heel for Morales, having observed: "Morales suffers from a malady that could be called acute self-assuredness."

A proud competitor, Jesus Chavez was promising the second coming of Morales' first blood-and-guts epic against Barrera in '00 to any willing reporter within earshot. For his part, Morales was dismissive, telling the press corps that Chavez had essentially quit in his only other major bout, against Floyd Mayweather, and wasn't mentally prepared for the type of combative pressure he was going to face.

And who can blame Morales for thinking that? Machismo might be genetically imprinted in Morales, but in 11 years of professional fighting, he has made his mark by knocking off his contemporaries with unusual guile and surgical punching ability. And if a pair of epic bouts with Barrera was enough to put him at the Hall of Fame's door, his signature performance against Paulie Ayala had pretty much knocked it wide open.

A vault to the 130-pound class was inevitable for Morales, who has long identified the weight scale as his greatest adversary. But in retrospect, extraordinary as he is, it could have been a little audacious for Morales to bulk up four pounds and go directly after Chavez' crown. Let's face it, Morales' official entry into the division last October against Guty Espadas was nothing more than a dry run against a fellow blown-up featherweight who trained by feasting on carbs. Chavez, 40-3 (28), was a certified junior lightweight, and he sent a message to Morales in the first round to remind him of it.

To his credit, Morales took the first phase of Chavez' onslaught with typical stoicism. No doubt, his head was buzzing from the combination that almost leveled him, but it took mere seconds for Morales to compose himself and start fighting back. At least Morales, 46-1 (34), had answered some questions about the sturdiness of his chin at the new weight. But judging by how Chavez—who'll never be mistaken for the division's premiere puncher—rattled him, they're the sort of questions Morales should be determined to avoid in future 130-pound bouts.



PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

The right uppercut (above) was a key punch for Morales against the hard-charging Chavez, and it accounted for the first of the two knockdowns (right) in the second round. After being rocked in the first round, the 10-7 followup gave Morales some much-needed breathing room.

On the other hand, there would be no question that the added pounds served to augment Morales' already vaunted power. The right uppercut proved to be a key weapon against Chavez, whose aggressive charges often left him folded at the waist and open to the punch. Morales landed it to perfection early in the second round, catching Chavez on the inside, and sending him lurching back in bewilderment as he thudded to the canvas. Chavez scurried to his feet, with the knockdown only serving to redouble his aggression. But this time, it was Morales who sensed victory at hand. With superb efficiency, he hammered home uppercuts and straight combinations, and another right hand that caught Chavez coming in sent him sprawling face-first to the mat for a second time. Chavez looked hurt, but gave his corner a reassuring wink before regaining his legs at referee Vic Drakulich's eight-count.

Chavez mounted a strong finish to the round, cracking Morales with a sharp right hand, but the knockdowns would prove the beginning of what would become an insurmountable deficit and some very bad luck. By the third, Morales had opened a small cut over the beltholder's left eye, but it paled to the greater dilemma of Chavez having re-aggravated a rotator cuff injury he sustained while in training last November. Repeatedly shaking out his right arm, Chavez fought rounds four through 12 with uncanny courage. He rushed Morales continuously and made prodigious use of his left, while his right hand stayed dormant. While not unprecedented, it was no less an inspired display.

It was remarkable that the normally astute HBO commentators failed to make note of Chavez' handicap until the eighth round. Even more befuddling was Morales. Despite sustaining an enormous beating to the right side of his head and body, including a substantial laceration on his right eyelid opened in the fourth, he claimed he had been unaware of the injury. Still, in the aftermath, Morales suggested it may have been a blessing in disguise for Chavez.

Said Top Rank publicist Ricardo Jimenez: "Erik said to me, 'Jesus had a lot of rhythm with his left hand. So he was keeping me busy and I couldn't do what I wanted to do with my right hand. But every time I threw my left he was blocking it because he was actually not moving his right hand.' So he felt that had Chavez had a right hand, he would have opened up with it a bit more and it would have given him a chance to do some damage. He said it probably helped him that he was injured. Offensively, it didn't help him, but defensively it helped him a lot."

Afterward, a pair of swollen hands gave testimony to the work Morales had done, but it was Chavez' performance that was more riveting for its sheer grit and courage. Morales tattooed him unrelentingly throughout, but Chavez still proved industrious enough to garner rounds five and 11, with the eighth a tossup. The verdict was unanimous in favor of Morales, with Burt Clements (United States) scoring 118-108 and John Keane (England) handing in a much closer vote of 115-112. THE RING agreed with judge Daniel Van de Wiele (Belgium), scoring 117-109.

"I think he should stay at super feather-

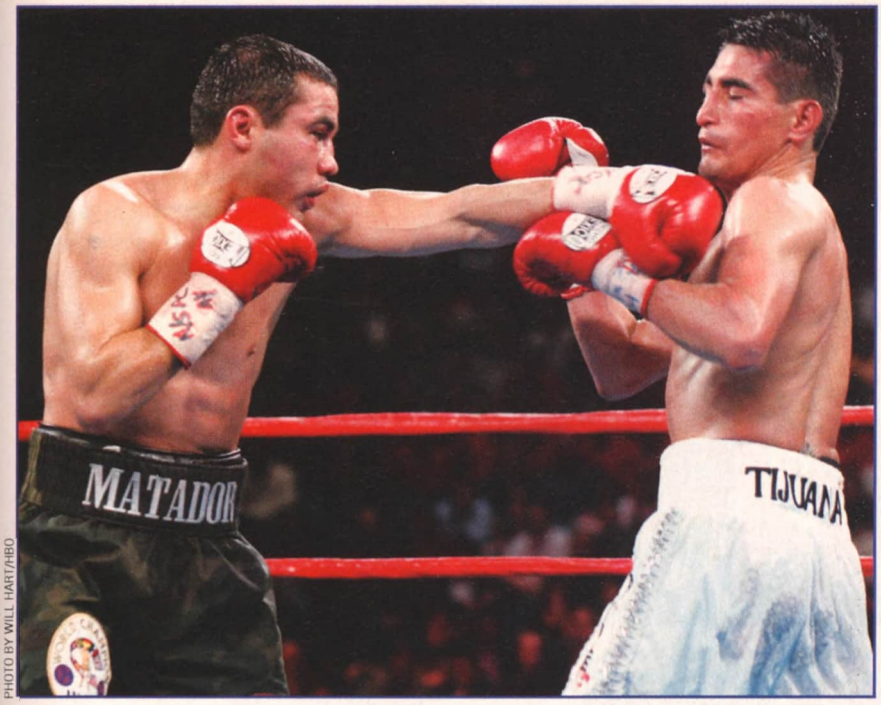


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Fighting with just one hand from the third round on due to an injured right shoulder, Chavez somehow stayed competitive with Morales. The injury may have limited Chavez' offense, but at the same time, it probably helped his defense because he rarely left openings on his right side.

weight as long as he can," Chavez said afterward. "Because if my shoulder gets better, I'm going to ask for a rematch. And believe me, it's going to be a different song."

While we may have seen a more competitive fight had Chavez not damaged his shoulder, radio host and *Las Vegas Review-Journal* boxing writer Kevin Iole believes the outcome would have been the same. A tendency to do just enough to win has sometimes characterized Morales in previous bouts, but Iole believes he is an exceptional fighter given his ability to spontaneously ratchet up his performance.

"I think Chavez was a courageous fighter, and it was a tremendously gutty effort on his part. But when push comes to shove, they are different classes of fighters. And Morales had another gear to go to that I don't know that Chavez did," said Iole. "It's too bad that the injury happened, because it was an unbelievable fight for those first two rounds and it was backing up Chavez' predictions that it would be another Morales-Barrera. But I think the result would have been the same. Erik is

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales' stiff jab has a telling effect on Chavez' face. "El Terrible" may be better served using his boxing skills in subsequent fights against stronger, harder-hitting junior lightweights, but his warrior instincts make such a strategic turn unlikely.

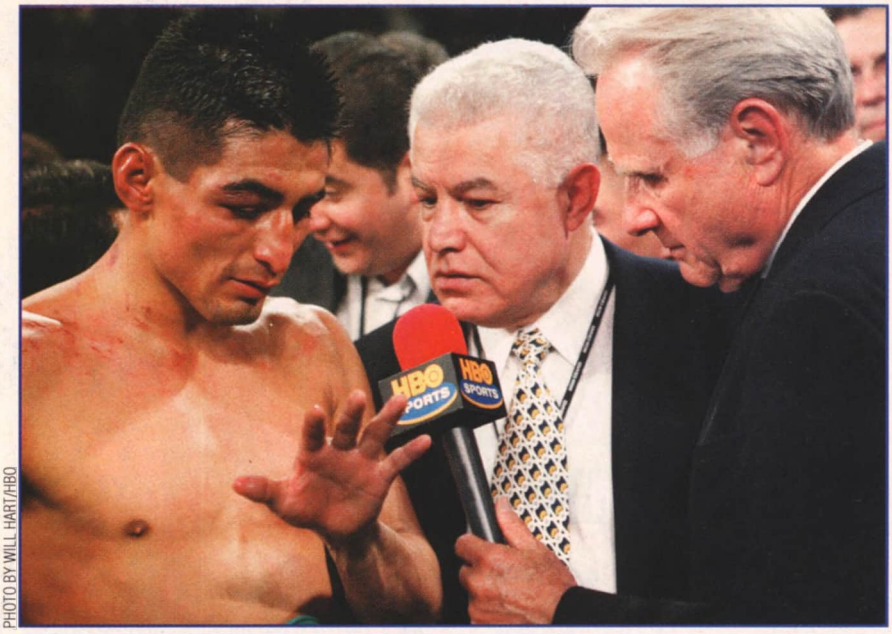


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales examines his throbbing hand as he chats with HBO's Larry Merchant and interpreter Ray Torres after the fight. Fights in the coming months against Carlos Hernandez, Diego Corrales, Manny Pacquiao, or Acelino Freitas don't figure to be any less demanding for Morales.

one of those elite-type athletes."

It's unlikely that Chavez will get a rematch anytime soon. But he might be right: From hereon, it looks to be a different song for Morales now that he is fighting bigger men.

Next, Morales will have the formidable task of squaring off against El Salvador's Carlos "Famoso" Hernandez in an alphabet unification fight slated for July or August. It's probable the bout will be held at the Home Depot Center in Los Angeles, where Hernandez will enjoy support from the city's large Salvadoran community. At first glance, the brawling but relatively light-fisted Hernandez might have been the easier choice for Morales' inaugural title fight at junior lightweight, but veteran trainer Jesse Reid feels differently.

"Hernandez is a completely different fighter. He's been hungry his whole life, like Chavez, but he's relentless," said Reid. "He doesn't look pretty doing it; he slaps with punches, and he throws with all kinds of funny punches, but he's super strong. And he doesn't want to lose his title. Famous Hernandez has a way of taking away your skills by staying right on top of you. He's a hard guy to fight."

Assuming he gets past Hernandez, as is expected, Morales faces a broad spectrum of possibilities for a proposed megafight late in the year. Not only are there compelling fights for Morales within the junior lightweight division, potential challengers are lining up both north and south of its border.

Now that Diego Corrales has evened the score with Joel Casamayor, a third fight between the two is likely. But make no mistake about it, both Corrales and Casamayor factor into the Morales mix once their expected trilogy has been completed. Meanwhile, Pacquiao looks to be the frontrunner to face Morales in "El Terrible's" third fight of '04, should the Filipino get past Juan Manuel Marquez this summer. And Brazilian bomber Acelino Freitas, once a force at junior lightweight, represents the ultimate test for Morales now that he owns an alphabet crown at 135 pounds.

Corrales' surprising split decision over Casamayor didn't represent as much a reinvention as it did a return to the skills that have always made him a dangerous fighter and potential threat to Morales. The rematch may have proven as inconclusive as their first tilt, but it reaffirmed both fighters as the most dangerous competition Morales can currently find in the division.

Both Pacquiao and Morales have made it clear that they are eager to fight, according to Jimenez, who claims a match between the two would likely take place in October or November. Morales is emphatic on one point, however: He's not interested in taking the fight at less than 130 pounds. That could be problematic for Pacquiao. His victory over Barrera was extremely impressive, but it remains questionable whether he can promptly add weight and come close to a repeat performance.

Looming in the distance is Freitas and a fight that could represent the crowning achievement to Morales' already spectacular career. But if the rock-solid Freitas was already looking like a perilous challenge for Morales at 130, it would seem almost suicidal to try him at 135. Freitas has made his statement in boxing as a blazing two-fisted knockout puncher, but victories in his recent fights against Casamayor and Artur Grigorian have also revealed him to be an able boxer. It's hard to envision any advantage Morales could claim over Freitas, except maybe a better chin and more guts.

So the question is, why bother?

The answer might be found in the same motives that have already driven him up the ranks to a third title. Morales, of North Tijuana, has long been a star in his native Mexico, but he has yet to match Chavez as the greatest fighter that country has ever produced.

Jimenez is pointed about what it would take for Morales to get close to that distinction: "Even though he beat Jesus Chavez, he was favored to beat Chavez, and he'll go in as a favorite to beat Hernandez. So it's going to take him going in as an underdog and beating somebody. I'm talking about a Mayweather or a Freitas. I think he might even go in as an underdog against Casamayor or Corrales. And it will take him beating at least one of those guys."

It's no secret how high the price of immortality is, and only a rare few ever have what it takes to pay it. Whatever the price, it's a burden of payment Morales is clearly prepared to assume. But think about it: Corrales? Casamayor? Pacquiao? Freitas? For Morales, the days of overconfidence had better be gone. ■

Paul Salgado is a freelance writer based in Toronto, Ontario, and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

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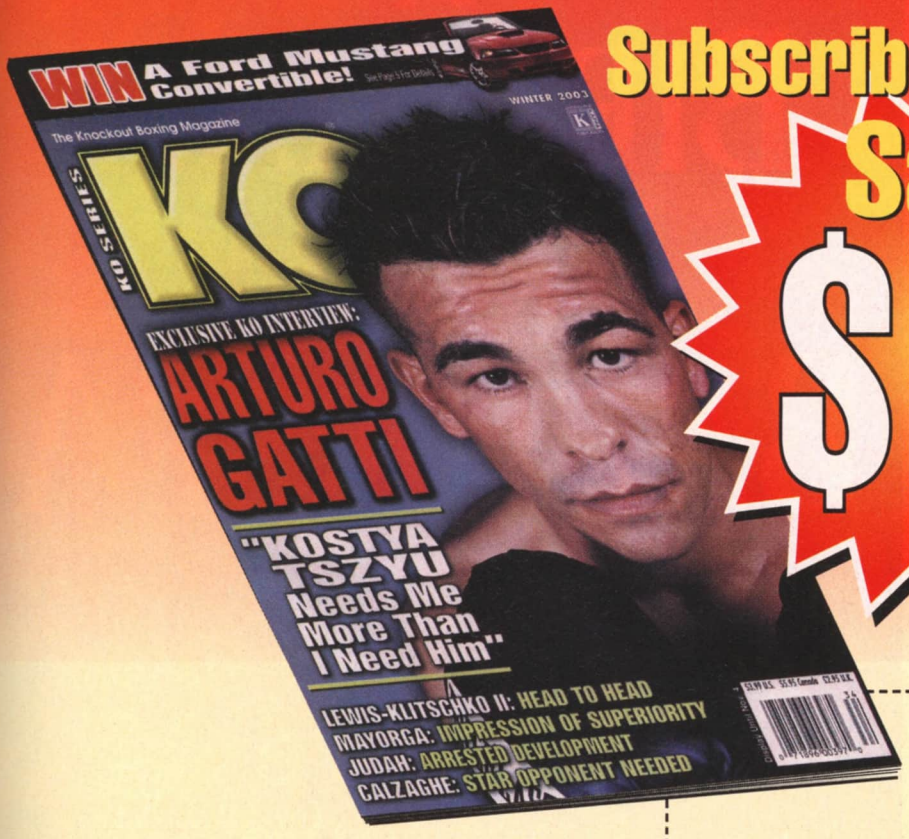

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THE BIRDMAN FROM BATTERSEA

How High Can Howard Eastman *Fly?*

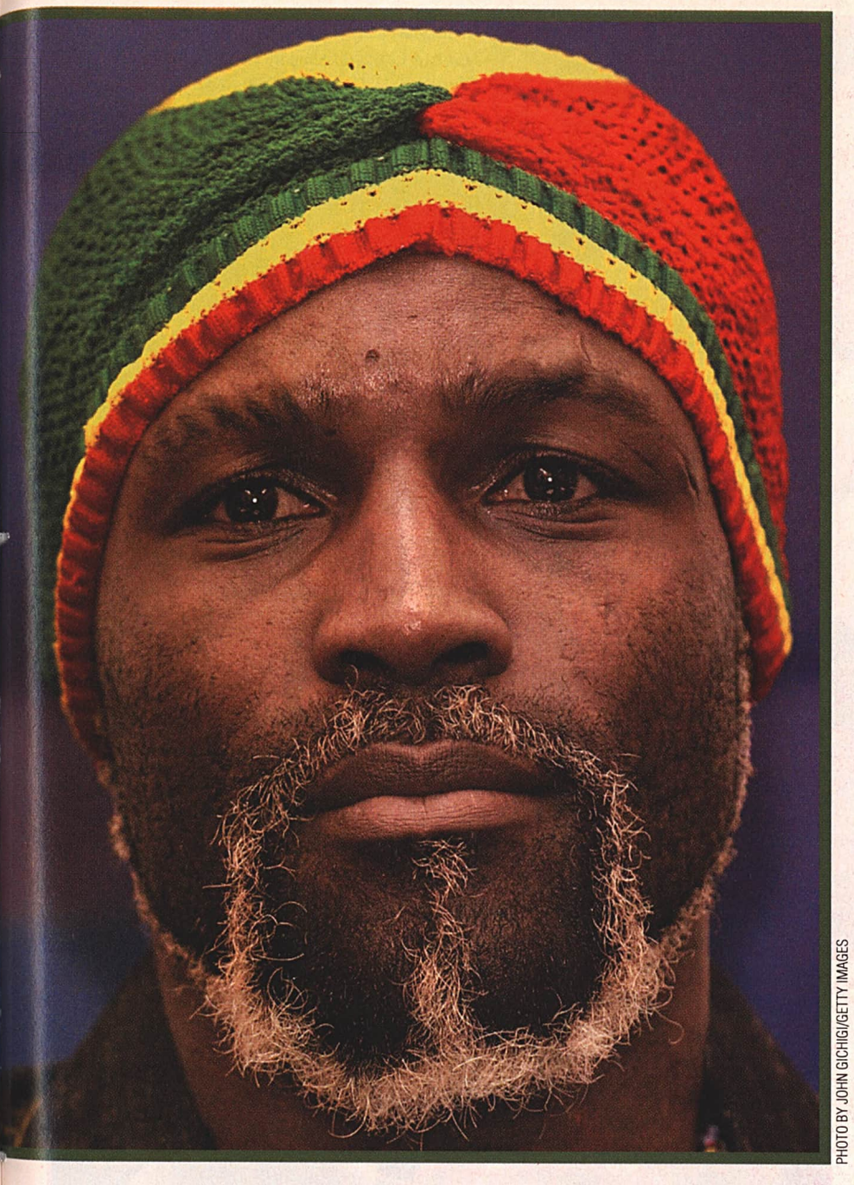

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

By Brian Doogan

Robert McCracken was describing the fighter he trains, a man whose heavy fists inflicted finality on his own career in the ring, a middleweight whose eccentricities are as interesting as his thoughts on fighting "The Executioner."

"What's Howard like? Howard will come into the gym with a bird on his shoulder, a big bird, a cockatoo or a parrot, I don't even know, and he'll say, 'Hello,' just like the bird wasn't even there," McCracken explained. "Then he'll start training, we'll work on the pads, whatever, and the bird will sit on the top rope, just sit there and watch him. He'll finish training, get showered, change, put the bird back on his shoulder, and go home. That's Howard. He's a quiet man, a very nice man. People say he can be awkward, weird. But he's just laid-back, very relaxed. He has what I'd call a great attitude to life, to his working life and to his life away from boxing."

London is Howard Eastman's adoptive city, a city whose streets he once wandered as one of the faceless, hopeless hundreds who are homeless. But Berbice, Guyana, is his spiritual home, where he was born and where he now spends most of his time between fights. In Berbice, just before speaking with *KO*, he was interviewed by Michael Etwaru on Little Rock TV. They do not see many of his fights here—this is the Caribbean, cricket country—but they like to know about the progress of the British, Commonwealth, and European middleweight champion, the leading contender to the division's dominant ruler, Bernard Hopkins.

"We were just discussing my last fight (a lackluster outing against world-rated Russian Sergey Tatevosyan, whom he outpointed over 12 rounds in Dagenham, east London, before returning to Guyana). They didn't see the fight. It was televised in Britain by the BBC, but not here," said Eastman, 39-1 (35), distinctive in appearance because he dyes his trimmed-down beard white while the hair on his head he keeps its natural black. "I like to come here to the studio and talk about my fights, but I like, too, the fact that I can walk outside the doors onto the street I'm standing on now and no one notices me. I like that because I'm a down-to-earth person."

Down behind the houses where he and his friends grew up, he proceeded to demonstrate how he learned to fight.

"There was no such thing as a gym to go to. We had limited resources. So after school we would come out here on the 'backdam'—it's made of mud—and we'd form a circle, 12, maybe 15 boys, and two of us would get in the middle with the gloves on and fight," he recollected. "Whoever fell would get up and step out, join the circle, and another boy would get in the middle. We had fun, but it was serious. We punched hard, and you had to be good or you could get hurt."

But what of the birds? What about the period in his life when he was without a home, yet somehow managed to keep hold of his dream and of his sense of self? What about the motorcycle accident that might have killed him, and his conviction that God and his own destiny saved him? How do you work out the enigma when the enigma is not much into explaining?

"I'd need more time than we have now to go into all these things," he said. "They're long stories."

This, then, is some of the story. Arnold Eastman left Guyana and made for England with his three sons when Howard was 15. Economics drove his decision, and he gained employment in London, making parts for airplanes. It was a few weeks after arriving in England when Eastman first set foot in a boxing gym in Battersea, the Heathbrook Boxing Club. His father took him there, but no one paid him much attention. After a while, he left and joined Battersea Amateur Boxing Club and ended up a short while later facing one of Heathbrook's most prominent fighters in a tournament.

"His name was Peter Wilson, and no one thought I'd beat him. They'd never thought much of me," Eastman said. "But Battersea had developed me. I'd begun to learn the trade and I knocked out Peter Wilson, which was a sweet feeling."

But this new life in London was not all sweet. For reasons he will not go into—"too long a story, some other time, man"—he found himself on the streets, living rough in south London, lonely and vulnerable to the dangers.

"Being homeless, there are a lot of opportunities to become lost, to be separated from the person you are if you let these opportunities take hold of you," he reflected. "Drugs, prostitution, all sorts, you see it all."

But faith in himself, and in God, gave him purpose, gave him a reason to go on, gave him light when his life was almost in total darkness.

"I was subjected to bullying as a child, at school I was bullied," he revealed. "One day I decided I'd had enough and I lashed out in sheer frustration. The bully, he dropped to the ground, and I remember I put my hand in the air and I said I would be a fighting champion. Boxing was in me all the time, and that childhood ambition kept me on the right path even in the worst times, that and my faith in God.

"It's a long, cold story, that period of my life. I lived rough for a long time, too long. But there's a saying: God doesn't give man more than he can bear. It's a true saying. I gained refuge first at the YMCA in Stockwell, then at the Centrepoint Hostel in Vauxhall. And the dream I had as a young boy I kept alive, and I rebuilt my life."

There were setbacks. He secured a job with a go-karting company and became a proficient driver, good enough to beat future British stars of Formula One Grand Prix racing like David Coulthard and Johnny Herbert. But money went missing one day. Eastman and another employee handled the cash. The boss accused Eastman of stealing and, despite his pleas of innocence, fired him. But that brought him closer to fighting for a living, he rationalizes now. They found the culprit who had stolen the money, and the boss, Bob Pope, paid for Eastman's first pair of shorts and robe.

"It was very generous what they did after that mistake," Eastman magnanimously assessed.

Of course, he made his own mistakes, too, painful life choices. One of these could have cost him his life. Riding a Yamaha R1, he had succumbed to his usual susceptibility: the need for speed. Approaching a corner too quickly, he could bail out in one of two ways, neither

Eastman lunges at slippery Sergey Tatevosyan en route to a 12-round decision in his most recent outing. It wasn't Eastman's most impressive performance, but it was his seventh straight victory and kept him in line for a shot at the world title.

PHOTO BY WIREIMAGE.COM

of them appealing: He could ride into the other lane and face onrushing traffic, or he could head for the hedge and take his chances. He chose the latter and escaped without even sustaining a broken bone. He had to be helped from the crash site, but was able to count his blessings.

"That's why I believe I'll beat Hopkins," declared Eastman. "That's the reason I'm still here. Too many things have happened in my life, life-threatening things. It has to be destiny. There has to be a reason."

Of course, there are still obstacles that stand in his way. The WBC has ordered a final eliminator between the 33-year-old Eastman and Italy's Cristian Sanavia. If successful in that fight—and he should be considering the limited Sanavia has a loss to Morrade Hakkar on his record—Hopkins would ideally be next, but it looks like Eastman will have to wait in

Eastman lands a hook to the head of William Joppy during their 2001 bout for a vacant middleweight belt, which Joppy won via majority decision. The fight was Eastman's only in America thus far, but he might take another trip across the Atlantic for a rematch with Joppy or a title shot against undisputed champion Bernard Hopkins.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

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In the first of four fairly easy kayo victories in 2003, Eastman disposed of Frenchman Christophe Tendil to claim the European 160-pound title. "The Battersea Bomber" ended the year by beating another French fighter, former alphabet titleholder Hassine Cherifi.

line behind Oscar De La Hoya. So instead, he may look toward the opportunity to exorcise the ghost of William Joppy, the lone defeat of his career, a close decision defeat in November '01 that he blames on the machinations of Don King.

"They wanted documents before I got in the ring that night, contracts. If I had signed my career over, I think you would have seen a different outcome," he said. "But I believe in myself. I'm self-managed and I want to stay self-managed. I'd have that belt if I had signed those documents, but I'd have compromised myself and that's not something I do.

"The people 'round Don King gave me a false sense of security. They made me feel like I was the favorite to win; all I had to do was go in and put on a show. So I didn't take the fight to him like I should have and I'd left it late when I got going around the eighth round. I knocked him down in the 12th and I showed the way the fight could have gone, but these are things you have to live with. I used to think about that Joppy fight every day, but I don't think about it as much as before."

Instead, he thinks mostly about Hopkins, the 39-year-old Philly phenomenon who delivered a masterclass against Joppy last December and seems to get better with each passing year.

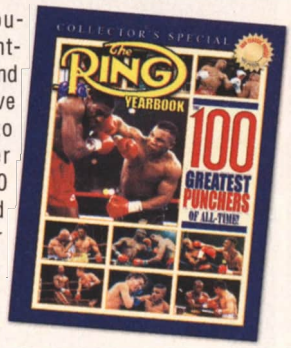
"He's a remarkable fighter," said Eastman, who is married to Nicole, with whom he has a baby daughter, Shinell. "He's accomplished so much. He's a role model, a role model to me and many fighters, I'm sure. But I want to fight him, of course. I'm in the business to do just that, to achieve things for myself and my family, to secure ourselves for the rest of our lives."

He insists it is not unusual that the man who trains him is a former foe, a fighter he beat by 10th-round stoppage in a grudge match in April '01. They are at peace now, and McCracken is sure that Eastman is the only man capable of dethroning boxing's middleweight king.

"They're the two best middleweights in the world by a country mile," said McCracken. "And Howard's capable of being a great fighter as well. He has power—I remember that from our fight, I'd never been hit like that before in my life. He's got good balance, throws punches in combination, and his accuracy is excellent.

"I knew him from way back. We sparred back in the mid-'90s. So it wasn't as if we were starting from scratch, like we were opponents who met each other in the ring and now we're working together as fighter and trainer. I knew that Howard's a really nice man. I knew he's ambitious and I knew that he works hard, and I believe that he'll get there, too, with all the hard work."

BOXING'S GREATEST PUNCHERS



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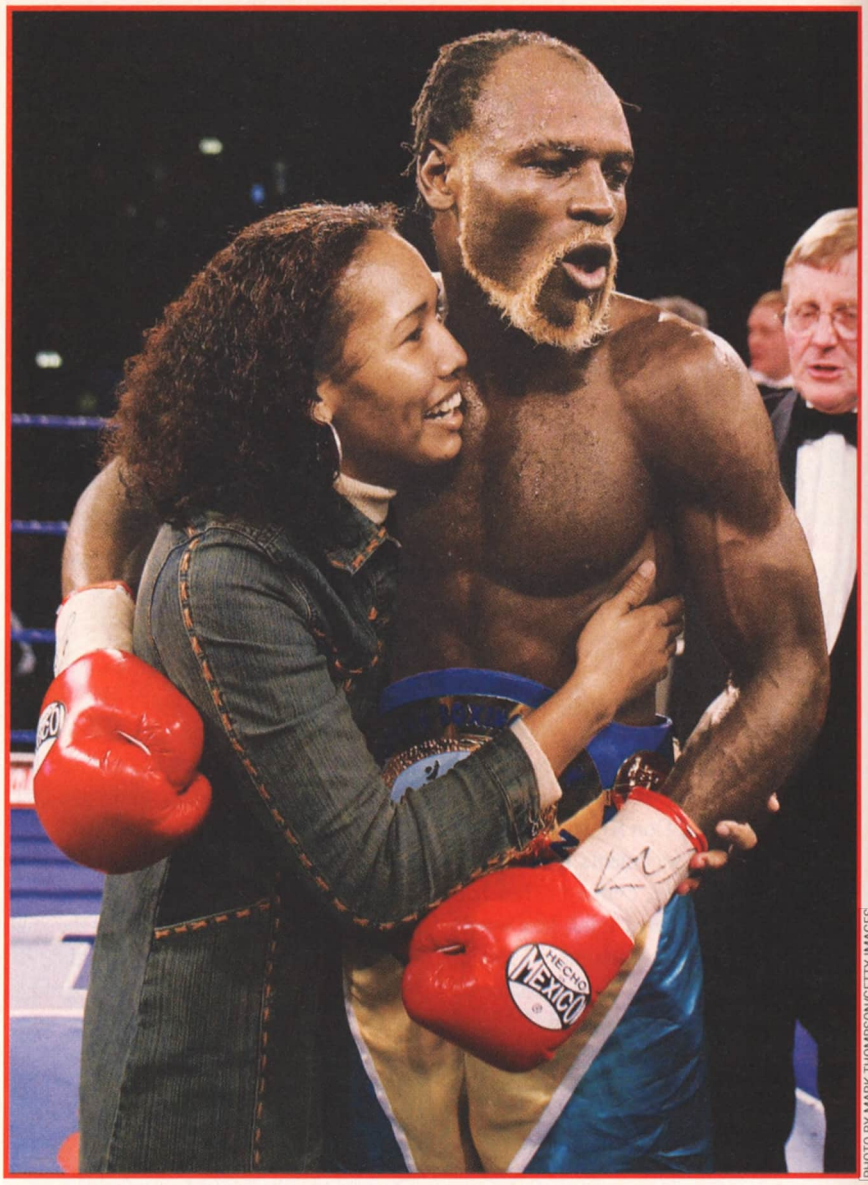

PHOTO BY MARK THOMPSON/GETTY IMAGES

Eastman celebrates a victory with his wife, Nicole. As a 33-year-old husband, father, and world-class fighter, Eastman has come a long way since his days of living homeless on the streets of London.

McCracken knows now about the birds as well, hardly the most customary patrons of a boxing gym.

"I've actually let the birds go," Eastman said, almost sadly. "I had to let them go with spending more time now in Guyana and less time in London. They lived with me, the birds, they all had names, and I just couldn't give them the time they need anymore. I love birds. I prefer birds to people. Some people suck. It's hard to find good people.

"I had parrots, cockatoos, lovebirds. They need special attention. So I gave them to friends who would look after them well. It was extremely difficult to part with them, but I had to. I spent time with them. I listened to their whistle. They made me happy so, of course, it was difficult. They sang beautiful songs. They all had their own character. They're special, man."

The birdman of Battersea, London, and Berbice, Guyana, aims to show this year that he is special, too. But one of the biggest birds of prey in boxing is standing in his path to greatness—and Bernard Hopkins won't come singing songs. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING'S European correspondent.

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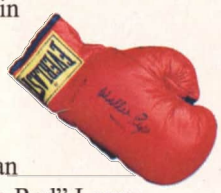

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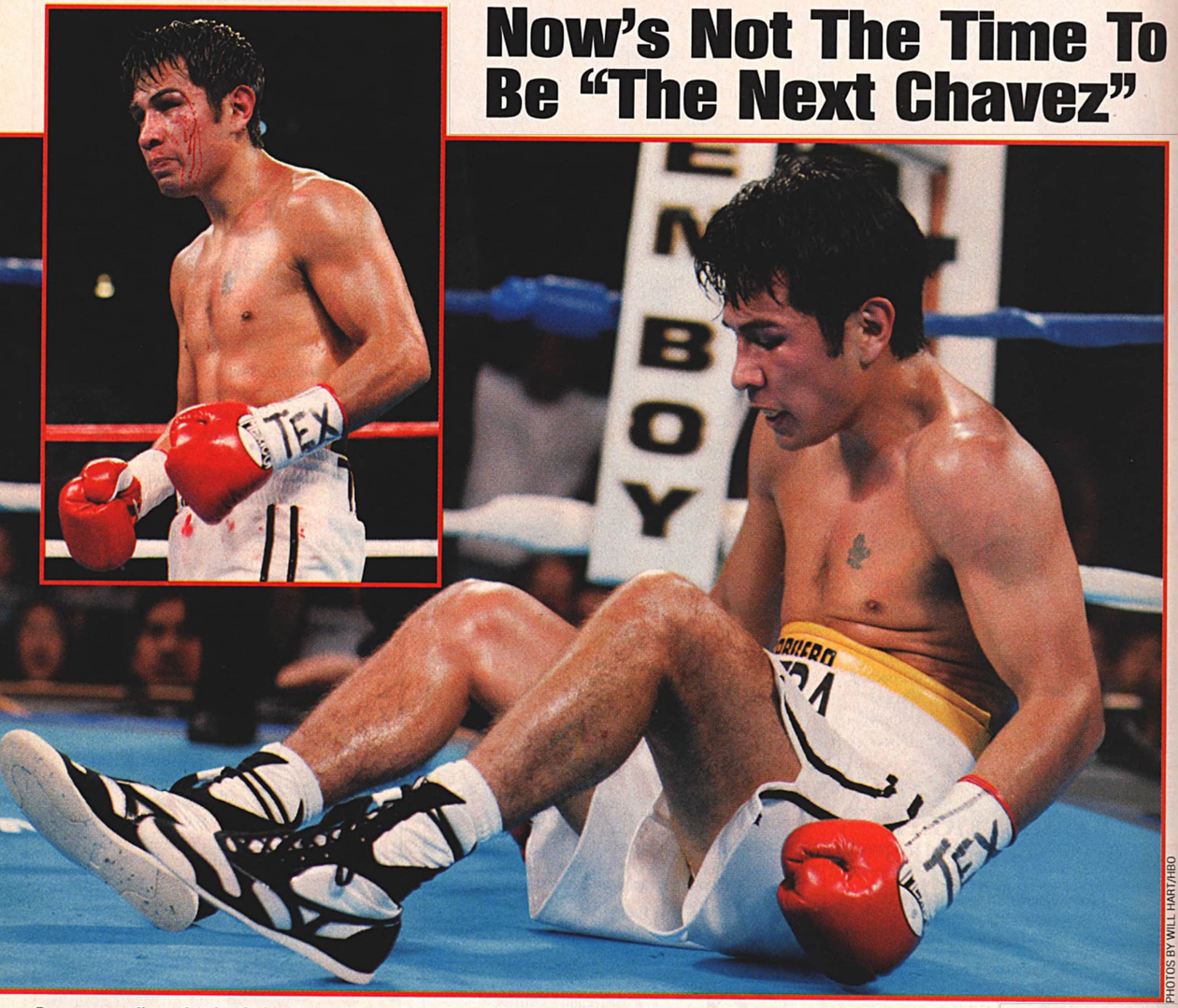


PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Barrera was floored twice before being stopped by Manny Pacquiao on November 15, 2003, in San Antonio. Barrera's devastating downfall was unexpected and has cast serious doubt on the 30-year-old Mexican warrior's future.

By Don Stradley

In 1991, when Julio Cesar Chavez was at the height of his popularity, Marco Antonio Barrera was a 17-year-old flyweight boxing four-rounders at The Coliseo in Mexico City. For his 12th pro fight, he was matched against a veteran named Juan Antonio Lopez who had been in the ring with some outstanding fighters and was supposed to be the youngster's first real test. Barrera, cool as a hired gun, knocked out Lopez in one round.

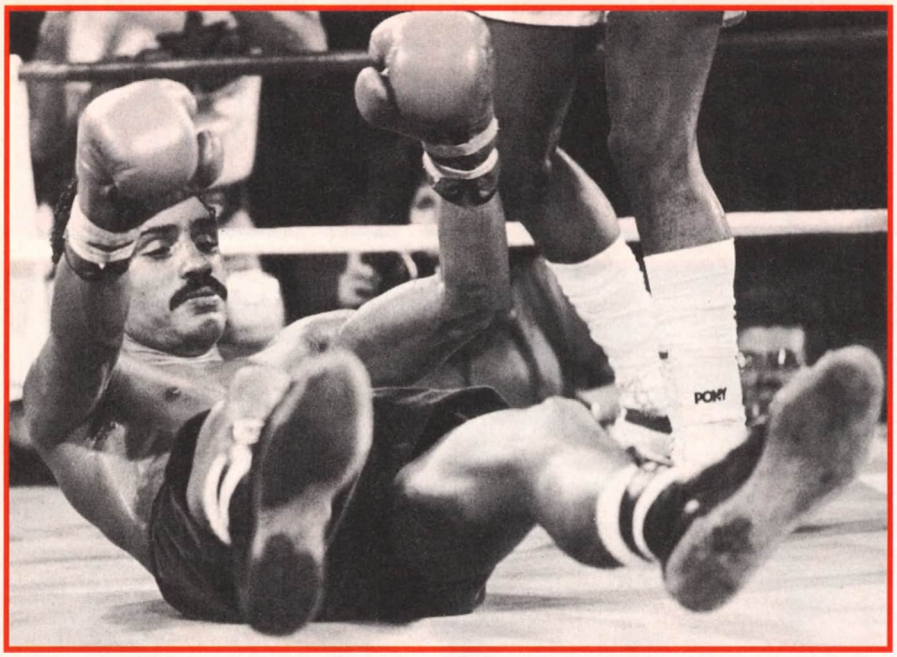
Barrera arrived at a time when any promising Mexican fighter was billed as "The next Chavez," and seemed closer than any of them to fulfilling that prophecy. HBO loved him. He became a regular attraction at The MGM Grand in Las Vegas. But then last November, just as we were getting used to having a living legend in our midst, he traveled to San Antonio and was savaged by Manny Pacquiao.

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

"I don't know what went wrong, but that wasn't me in there," Barrera said.

Training for the fight had been difficult. Barrera's distractions included having to relocate his Big Bear training camp because of a forest fire, and the revelation that brain surgery performed six years earlier had left him with a metal plate in his head. He made no excuses, but admitted to having trouble concentrating. We also suspect Barrera is

There were times during the Pacquiao bout when Barrera dug in and fought back with some good punches (left), but the defending featherweight champion could not keep up with the rampaging Filipino and took a savage beating (below) before being knocked down and stopped in the 11th round.



Barrera fans who believe that he just had an off-night and will beat Pacquiao in a rematch would be well-advised to remember what happened to Alexis Arguello in his second fight with Aaron Pryor. After suffering an upset kayo in the first fight, Arguello took an even worse beating in the rematch.

finally showing the strain of a professional career that began in 1989.

"It's his decision, but I don't want him to fight again," said Barrera's trainer, Rudy Perez.

Fighters are rarely the same after the sort of mauling Pacquiao gave Barrera. But can the 30-year-old Barrera, who has vowed to come back at 100 percent, be the exception to the rule?

"Barrera has shown that he can bounce back from a loss," said Carlos Arias of *The Orange County Register*. "He climbed all the way to the top of the pound-for-pound lists after his two losses to Junior Jones. But that was a much younger Barrera. Pacquiao gave him a pounding. It's going to be very hard for him to regain his lofty status among boxing's elite, but it's possible."

Barrera's popularity among Latino boxing fans had peaked in recent years, nearly rivaling that of Chavez. "Each year I ask the readers to vote for their Fighter Of The Year," said Arias. "For two years in a row it was Barrera." After the loss to Pacquiao, Arias described fan reaction on the West Coast as "total shock."

Perhaps nobody was as shocked by Barrera's loss as Oscar De La Hoya, who had signed Barrera last June to fight for Golden Boy Promotions. De La Hoya said after the Pacquiao fight, "Marco is a gentleman, a true class act in the sport. I will be with him and support him as long as he wants me to."

"I am sure that I can recover my place," Barrera said. "The idea is to do a fight, and subsequently to seek the big bouts. It depends on Oscar, if he can help me seek revenge against the Filipino. He told me that I could count on it."

Bernado Osuna, on-air commentator for Telefutura's *Solo Boxeo*, thinks Barrera can still be successful, but doesn't believe a rematch with Pacquiao is even necessary. According to Osuna, Barrera's loyalists may think Pacquiao is too strong for him and wouldn't care to see a rematch.

"A more interesting opponent for Barrera might be Juan Manuel Marquez," said Osuna. "Hispanic fans have wanted that fight for a long time." What's most urgent, Osuna said, is for Barrera to prove he still has the stuff that made him a "young Mexican icon."

"The manner in which he lost was very disappointing for his fans because he didn't go down fighting," said Osuna. "People had grown to love Barrera because of the fire he always showed, but against Pacquiao we saw none of that. He needs to show that he can still be the Barrera of old."

There are many attractive matches for Barrera. Paulie Ayala and Oscar Larios come to mind. Erik Morales has moved up to junior lightweight, but would prob-

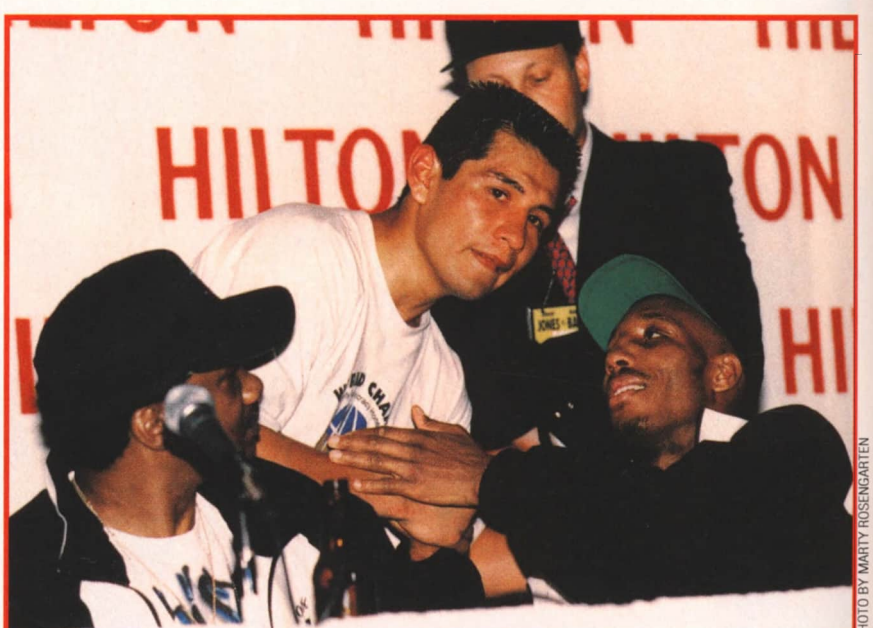


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Barrera does not have a good record in rematches. He is pictured congratulating Junior Jones following Jones' second victory over him. Barrera also failed to perform as well in his rematch with Erik Morales, even though he won a disputed decision.

In his prime, Barrera was often spoken of as the "new Chavez." Now that he's slowing down, will he follow in the "old" Julio Cesar Chavez' footsteps and begin to feast on second-tier opponents, as Chavez did in this 1996 bout with Joey Gamache?

ably welcome a third fight with Barrera. Even Naseem Hamed may come out of hiding now that Barrera seems vulnerable. When Chavez was showing signs of age in 1994, Don King again matched him with the man who had made Chavez a legend, Meldrick Taylor. It didn't matter that Taylor was a shot fighter by that time; the rematch allowed Chavez to give his fans the illusion that he was still the fighter they'd worshipped. Hamed would serve the same purpose for Barrera. In fact, Barrera could probably get away with fighting a bunch of harmless journeymen and his devoted followers would love it.

Latino boxing fans are not that far removed from the people who attend Lucha Libre shows, the Mexican version of professional wrestling that has been around for decades. They don't care who their favorite masked luchador is fighting. They just want to see him win so they can celebrate. Julio Cesar Chavez took advantage of this mindset with a late-career bum-of-the-month tour that took him to places like Culiacan, Tijuana, and El Paso, where his fans were still willing to pay good money to see him. They didn't mind that he was flabby and battle-scarred, or that he was facing some unknown whose record was so padded you could sleep on it. They only wanted to see Chavez swagger down the aisle one more time.

But people close to the Mexican boxing scene don't see Barrera following Chavez' example. Barrera has never lusted for fame like Chavez, who used to complain if his name wasn't big enough on the marquee to suit his ego.

"Barrera is different from other fighters," Arias said. "He's not from a poor background. He's very intelligent."

Osuna adds: "Economics might bring Barrera to the ring a few more times, but he won't go on and on like Chavez."

While Barrera could entertain his fans without fighting Pacquiao again, he is a proud fighter who has always sought rematches with his conquerors. But would a rematch be any different? It's easy to imagine Barrera in the same position as Alexis Arguello at the end of his second fight with Aaron Pryor, sitting on the canvas shaking his head in disbelief. It may not even be a matter of styles. It could be that Barrera is passing his prime just as Pacquiao is entering his. After 61 professional bouts, "The Baby Faced Assassin" is no longer so baby faced. Maybe that's why he's been taking on softer opponents like Johnny Tapia and Kevin Kelley, older fighters well past their primes. Could Barrera, 57-4 (40), have sensed that something

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Hall of Famer Matthew Saad Muhammad found his Pacquiao in Dwight Muhammad Qawi, who dished out two one-sided beatings just as Saad was passing his prime. Saad was only 28—even younger than Barrera is now—when he realized his best days were behind him.

like the Pacquiao fight was about to happen?

"The fighter himself is the first one to know," Sugar Ray Robinson once said, countering the notion that fighters don't realize their skills are eroding. Robinson told W.C. Heinz that his reflexes were slowing as early as 1950, long before anyone else noticed. Robinson was 29 that year, the same age Barrera was against Pac-Man. Matthew Saad Muhammad, perhaps the most exciting fighter of his era, was 28 when he realized his tank was empty.

"I almost felt like I wanted to get beat," Muhammad said about his 1981 fight with Dwight Qawi. "I didn't feel like training, even though it was a title fight. I just wasn't into it."

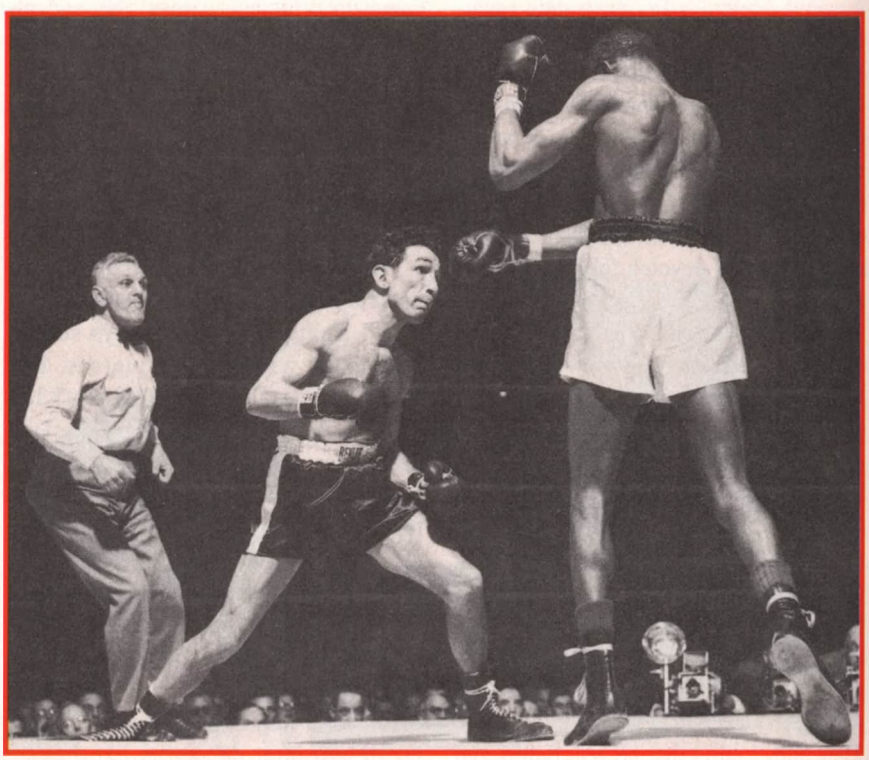
During his memorable reign as WBC light heavyweight titleholder, Saad Muhammad was Barrera in reverse, a slick boxer who decided midway through his career to turn every fight into a street brawl. Against Qawi, however, he couldn't summon his usual come-from-behind rally and was stopped in 10 rounds. He took an even worse beating in the rematch. Muhammad was never the same after those one-sided losses to Qawi.

When Barrera changed his style in 2000 from brawler to boxer we applauded him for taking measures to preserve himself, but maybe the change came about because brawling is a young man's game and Barrera wasn't feeling up to it anymore. We also praised Barrera when he turned his back on the alphabet federations. Now we have to wonder if he did it to avoid fighting mandatories against younger fighters. When he finally met Pacquiao, Barrera said the Filipino slugger reminded him of himself in his younger days. Loose translation: I am no longer young.

The only fighter to have any sort of success against Pacquiao in recent years has been Agapito Sanchez, whose dirty tactics frustrated Pacquiao to the brink of tears, but ever since then, Pacquiao has been a man-eater. In order for Barrera to beat Pacquiao, he'd have to put forth an effort just short of supernatural. It sounds impossible, but at least one famous featherweight has succeeded against an opponent who seemingly had his number.

For Willie Pep, the freakishly tall and powerful Sandy Saddler must have been a walking nightmare. Their first fight ended with Saddler taking Pep's featherweight title by a fourth-round knockout. Nobody gave Pep a chance in the rematch, but four months later at Madison Square Garden, Pep put on a display that still ranks as one of the greatest performances in boxing history.

Pep danced. He jabbed. He scored



Willie Pep's second fight with Sandy Saddler serves as the classic example of how a great but aging fighter can sometimes summon one last magnificent effort and defeat a younger opponent. Conventional wisdom says Barrera will need to be nearly perfect, as Pep was against Saddler, to reverse his loss to Pacquiao.

with jarring right hands to the jaw. And he took punishment. In fact, Pep took more punishment in winning this fight than he ever did when Saddler beat him. By the end of the 15th round, Pep was bleeding and exhausted. Shortly after the unanimous decision was announced in his favor, he collapsed and had to be revived with ice bags. "It was the greatest night of my life," Pep said.

Historically, Barrera doesn't do well in rematches. He went the distance in his rematch with Junior Jones, but couldn't win the decision, and was overly cautious in his second fight with Morales. Against Pacquiao, he'll have to do more than avoid getting knocked out. And if he's too cautious, Pacquiao will be on him like a pack of wolves. Instead, Barrera needs to reach into a chamber deep inside and let the fire come screaming out one last time. Last November, there was a moment in the sixth round when Barrera gritted his teeth and threw punches, momentarily stopping Pacquiao in his tracks. Unfortunately for Barrera, he couldn't keep it up, and Pacquiao resumed his feeding frenzy.

In order to defeat Pacquiao, Barrera will have to match Willie Pep's effort from 1949. He'll have to withstand Pacquiao's bombs throughout the fight, and throw bombs of his own. He'll have to use the liver-splitting left hook that was absent in San Antonio. Most important of all, Barrera will have to get his punches off first and dictate the pace, something he couldn't do last time. Pacquiao's ability to impose his will on Barrera was frightening. But we don't know if Barrera is still capable, or even interested, in those tours of hell that occasionally take place in a boxing ring.

"Barrera has some great fights left," Osuna said. "I just think he and many other people underestimated Manny Pacquiao. What Barrera has to do now is some soul searching to find out if he is still dedicated."

He should also find out if that 17-year-old assassin is still lurking somewhere inside him. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

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From Dempsey To The Gas Pipe

The Crazy Life And Death Of HANK HANKINSON

By Pete Ehrmann

"Hank Hankinson, who is said to be just as dangerous with the ladies as he is in the ring, was seen at the Hollywood fights the other night with blonde Natalie Jenkins Carr ..."

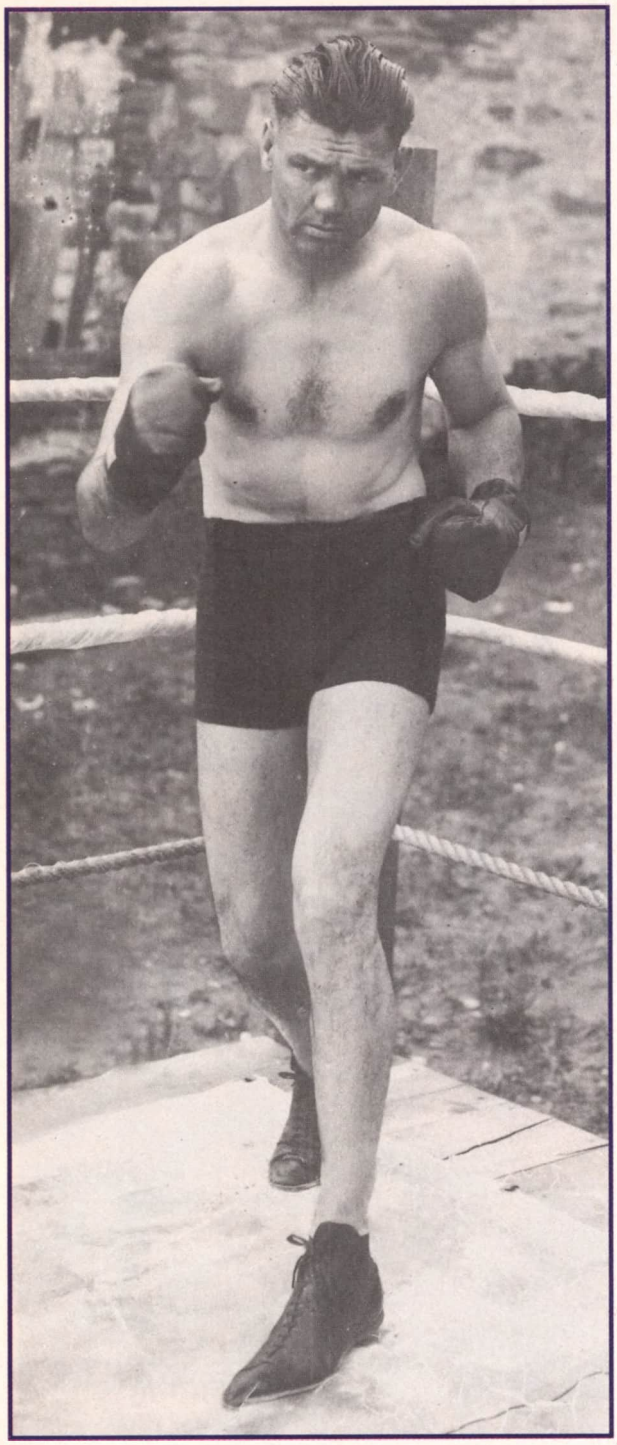
—Los Angeles Times
July 30, 1935

Columnist Braven Dyer didn't realize it when he penned that juicy piece of gossip, but truer words were never spoken about Ellsworth F. Hankison, a.k.a. Hank Hankinson, the Depression-era heavyweight contender also jocularly referred to as "Hankus-Pankus," which isn't Latin for "hanky-panky" but in his case might as well have been.

Unfortunately for the lady who was his most notable kayo victim, hanky-panky was not the worst of the sins committed by the 6'4", 220-pound slugger hailed in his time as one of "the greatest 'knocker-outers' in the history of pugilism."

Whether the latter was literally true or just more fertilizer flung by Hankinson's manager, who spread more of the stuff than John Deere, hunky Hank did in fact dish out some heavy leather. Jack Dempsey found that out when he was barnstorming around the country on an exhibition tour in 1932, padding his bankroll and gauging his fitness for a full-blown comeback by roughing up local strong boys. What happened when the former heavyweight champion hit Akron, Ohio, on March 10 made headlines.

"A 19-year-old farm boy from Lancaster, Ohio, with 205 pounds of muscle, sent Jack Dempsey reeling to



Former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey was on an exhibition tour and pondering a comeback when he boxed Hankinson in 1932. Even though Dempsey knocked him out, the 19-year-old novice did well enough to convince manager Suey Welch that he should turn pro.

the ropes in an exhibition bout before the former champion of the world finally finished him with a knockout," reported the Associated Press.

"A capacity crowd of 3,500 yelled itself hoarse as Dempsey and Hank Hankison slugged it out toe-to-toe. Hankison landed a left on the former champion's chin in the first 30 seconds that left Dempsey with sagging knees. Dempsey was fairly snarling as the second opened. He drilled five lefts to Hankison's jaw and the boy went down for nine. Hankison got up and slugged with Dempsey until four wallops on the chin dropped him for the third and last time."

What the story left out was even more stunning than that left hook that rocked Dempsey. It was Hankison's first time in the ring, and the idea had been to "get his damned fool head knocked off a him, just to teach him some sense."

Those were the instructions of Ezra Hankison when he appeared at the office of Akron fight manager Suey Welch to seek his help in taming Ezra's son Ellsworth, who devoted more time and energy to his self-appointed role as the toughest streetfighter in Lancaster, a small community near Columbus, than he did to helping out on the family farm.

Ellsworth's chief competition for the honor was another farm boy called Big Bill Eck, with whom Hankison brawled whenever they came anywhere near one another. Dempsey was a quantum step up in class for him, and though "The Manassa Mauler" put him down for the count, Hankison's fearlessness and that left hook convinced Welch that the farm was no place for him.

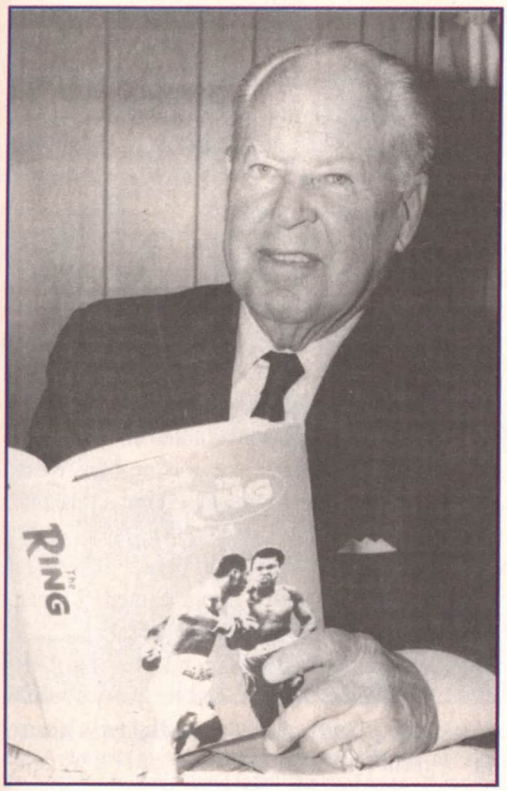
Welch was an operator who'd gotten into the managing business by signing up a boxer who'd beaten him in a tournament. In the late-1920s, he'd done well maneuvering football-player-turned-heavyweight-boxer K.O. Christner to several big paydays. But his steadiest meal ticket was William "Gorilla" Jones, a black middleweight who won partial recognition as champion in '31, but whose genuine ring brilliance was occasionally dimmed down by Welch to keep Jones marketable. Some of Jones' less-than-enthusiastic efforts caused him and Welch to suffer the official disapproval of various boxing commissions and ruling boards, and finally the whole crew hightailed it for the West Coast, where the political heat was less intense.

That's where the Hankinson juggernaut—Welch added the middle "n" to Hank's surname—really got rolling, after a catastrophe so embarrassing it never made it into Hankinson's record hastened the beeline for the Golden State. On Thanksgiving, 1933, an ordinary pug named Jack Pollett needed just 35 seconds to prove that it didn't take a Dempsey to cut the towering ex-farmer down like a shock of wheat.

Like a lot of boxers born with iron fists, in Hankinson's case that gift of nature was offset by the Styrofoam in his jaw.

In California it happened three more times over the ensuing years, but Hankinson promptly returned the favor against Jack Scott, Ed Mosebar, and Fred Feary, stopping each one in the first round of their rematch. According to the *L.A. Times*, Mosebar "was forced to go to a sanatorium to recover from 'shell shock'" after Hankinson was done with him, and ex-amateur star Feary exchanged his boxing gloves for a pair of rasslin' tights.

If hoary old newspaper clippings are to be given more credence than equally unreliable old record books, by the time of Hankinson's breakthrough match with ranked contender Charley Retzlaff



Manager Welch checks out The Ring Boxing Encyclopedia And Record Book many years after his wild-and-woolly association with Hankinson.

on March 29, 1935, Hankinson had knocked out 50 of the 55 men he'd faced, giving him a mightier clouting average (.909) than that logged by the most talked-about fighter on the opposite coast, and the man who followed Hankinson as a "Prospect Of The Month" in THE RING the year before—Joe Louis, then at .812.

While the record books catalog only a fraction of the many fights for the transplanted Ohioan, Hankinson's power is documented by his two-round upset kayo of the equally hard-hitting Retzlaff before a sellout crowd at the Hollywood Legion Stadium.

That put Hankinson in THE RING's Top 10, and while a much-discussed showdown with Louis never went beyond that, Welch's phenom was the biggest drawing card on the West Coast. Hollywood Legion Stadium—"the most profitable boxing club of its size in the world," according to THE RING's Eddie Bordan—couldn't accommodate everyone who turned out for his subsequent fights against Cowboy Ford Smith and former light heavyweight champion Maxie Rosenbloom, both of whom lasted 10 rounds with Hank but lost decisions. The latter victory boosted Hankinson to the fourth rung on THE RING's ladder of contenders for Jimmy Braddock's title.

Outside the ropes, however, there was a growing problem hinted at in the *Times*' preview of the Smith fight, which cryptically noted, "Hankinson may be running into more trouble than he anticipates, and he's not exactly looking forward to a pink tea party, preferring it straight to tea, anyway."

The big guy could belt, all right—and did it prodigiously in the nightclubs Hankinson and his growing bevy of female admirers frequented. One of the latter was movie siren Mae West, who surprised onlookers at the Legion Stadium by abandoning her usual cool, above-it-all demeanor at the fights to passionately cheer Hankinson to victory against Rosenbloom from her ringside seat. Part of it had to do with the $1,100 the screen queen had bet on Hankinson, but given their mutual nocturnal proclivities and the fact that he had bit parts in a couple of West's movies, it's a good bet that Hankus-Pankus was in hunky-dory with the Hollywood sex bomb.

Drinking, smoking, and skirt chasing sure as hell trumped mixing it up with Big Bill Eck for the heavyweight championship of Lancaster, Ohio, and as Hankinson embraced his new favorite pastimes, his performances in the ring suffered accordingly. He beat Rosenbloom again and decisioned Charlie Massare, but in his much-anticipated New York debut on the Joe Louis-Max Baer undercard, Hank couldn't finish off Eddie Maber after dropping him in the third round and lost the decision.

When they signed shopworn King Levinsky to fight Hankinson on January 14, 1936, the California boxing commis-

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Former light heavyweight champion Maxie Rosenbloom (pictured) was past his peak when Hankinson twice outpointed him in '35. Nonetheless, the noteworthy victories were enough to push Hankinson to the number-four spot in THE RING's heavyweight rankings.

sion gave its approval to the match with some trepidation. The Windy City fish-peddler had been knocked around plenty in recent fights, and it was Levinsky's almost hysterical fear of Joe Louis as much as anything "The Brown Bomber" threw at him in their match several months earlier that caused Levinsky to fold up in less than a round.

But if he was scared of Hankinson, Levinsky covered it well by declaring, "That big bozo—I'll stretch him out swell."

He did, too, but the bell saved Hankinson from a first-round kayo before 10,000 fans at the Olympic Auditorium. He hung in for the full 10, but the decision for Levinsky was a formality.

It wasn't straight downhill after that, at least not right away. Hankinson beat a young Lee Savold and several non-entities, and knocked out ancient George Godfrey; but in-between he lost to Hans Birkie, Jack Roper, and Andre Lenglet. The problem, according to Gene Vinassa, THE RING's California correspondent, was obvious:

"When in shape, Hank Hankinson is a good fighter, but he is a playboy. No one, not even Chang Welch, knows when Hank will show up for a fight in condition. When in shape, Hankinson looks like a champion."

Chang Welch was Suey's brother, who inherited Hankinson's contract after Suey became matchmaker at the Olympic Auditorium. Later, Chang would undoubtedly wish he had jumped at the chance when Stan Laurel, the sad-faced half of the movie comedy duo Laurel and Hardy, offered him $5,000 for Hankinson's contract after the Godfrey fight.

And Laurel must've allowed himself a broad, out-of-character smile when the dissolute Hankinson subsequently went on another knockout binge, only this time as the knockee. Pedro Lovell, Phil Brubaker, Tiger Jack Fox, and former champion Baer each took him out in one round to end the fighting career of the playboy puncher on a note of woeful ignominy.

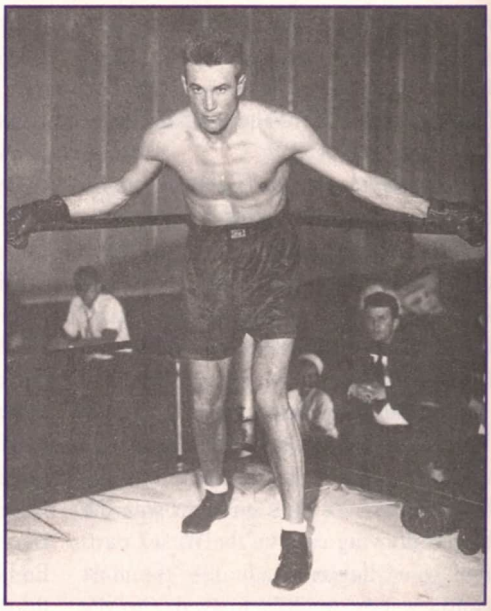
The gloved part of it, anyway. As for the ignominy, that got a whole lot worse.

Those fabled holiday party-poopers the Grinch and Scrooge put together never accounted for as much havoc as Hankinson wreaked on Christmas Eve, 1940, when he embarked on a brand-new knockout streak.

First he went to the cafe operated by his former manager, Chang Welch, where instead of tidings of joy, he delivered a beating that put Welch into a coma for two weeks.

There would be better Christmases for Welch, but Dorothy Laverne wasn't that lucky. Contemporary press accounts identify her as a 30-year-old silent films actress, but the fact that Hankinson got the celebrity billing in the aftermath of their brief and unfortunate involvement makes it apparent she was no Mae West. Hank had long ago ceased attracting that caliber of star.

Laverne met him in a bar where Hankinson and a friend named Norman Bollenbach had gone after Hank's encounter with Welch. The trio barhopped for a while, and the party eventually adjourned to the ex-fighter's apartment on Union St., where after a while it was joined by Miss Frankie Jackson, another acquaintance of Hankinson's whose festive mood nose-dived at the sight of the actress. Miss Jackson pulled Miss Laverne's hair and ordered her to scram, and a loud catfight ensued. Hankinson ended it with the kind of per-



Hankinson's second-round knockout of Charley Retzlaff (pictured) in front of a sellout crowd at Hollywood's Legion Stadium in 1935 was the Ohio puncher's first victory over a ranked contender.

King Levinsky, pictured with his mother at his Chicago fish store, was iced in one round by Joe Louis in '35, but came off the floor to decision Hankinson the next year. It marked the beginning of Hankinson's slide into oblivion.

formance that used to bring 'em out of their seats at the Legion Stadium.

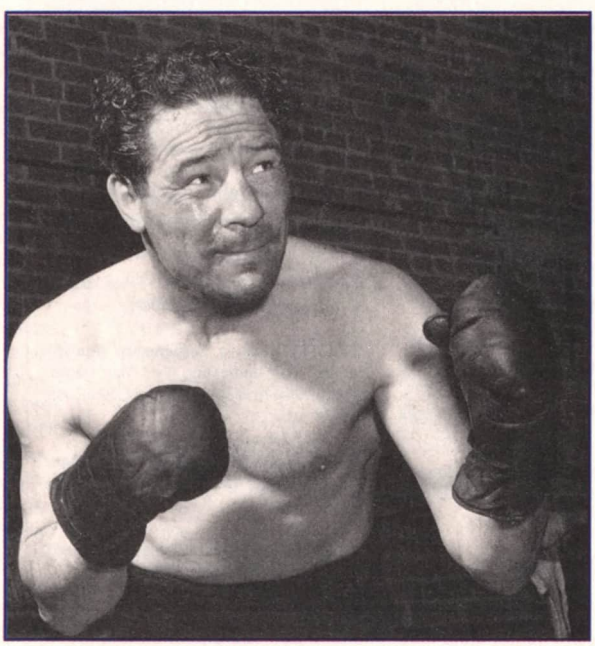
Miss Jackson limped away with various bruises and contusions, and when Bollenbach tried to intervene, Hankinson whacked him, too. But the worst of it went to Miss Laverne, whose face was just about caved in by the big man's blows.

She didn't die outright, but succumbed five days later from a massive infection caused by her injuries. A murder warrant was issued for Hankinson, identified on Miss Laverne's deathbed as her assailant, along with one for the assault of Chang Welch. Hankinson eluded a police dragnet for two weeks before giving himself up.

At the trial in April 1941, Hankinson admited smacking Miss Jackson, but claimed it was Bollenbach who'd teed off on Miss Laverne. The jury took just over an hour to find otherwise, convicting Hankinson of manslaughter. Granted a new trial just days later, he opted instead to cop a plea to assault with intent to produce great bodily harm and got 1-to-10 years at San Quentin.

He had served just a deuce when the parole board cut him loose with the stipulation that Hankinson go back where he came from. Those inclined to view this as a gross failure of American jurisprudence will find a certain poetic justice in what happened on December 27, 1943, when the body of Ellsworth F. Hankinson, 35, was found in the Muncie, Indiana, apartment of one Maxine White, 36. She was dead, too. The gas was turned on, but the official ruling was death by accident. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer based in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.



Hankinson's final bout came in October 1938 when an aging Max Baer (pictured) knocked him out in the opening round. Five years later, following a stint in prison, Hankinson was dead.

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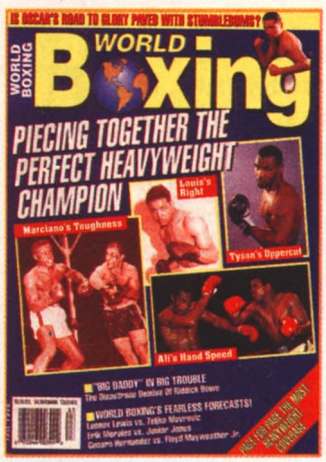

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Ray Mercer KO 2 Steve Pannell
Shannon Briggs KO 1 Jeff Pegues
Samuel Peter KO 2 Jose Da Silva
Derrick Jefferson Tech. Win 8 Julius Long
Nicolay Valuev KO 1 Dick Ryan
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Talmadge Griffis KO 5 Harold Rodriguez
Ray Austin Tech. Win 4 Willie Williams
Tony Thompson KO 1 Joe Lenhart
Kelvin Hale W 8 Sherman Williams
Bruce Seldon KO 3 Otis Tisdale
Peter Okello KO 7 Auckland Auimatagi
Gilbert Martinez W 6 Sione Asipeli
Maurice Wheeler W 6 David Bostice
Steffen Nielsen W 6 Roberto Mundos
Cyril Seror KO 4 Adolfo Obando
Billy Zumbrun KO 10 Wade Lewis
Yamplier Azcuy W 8 Michael Simms
George Linberger KO 1
Rocky Ray Phillips
Eddie Chambers W 8 Cornelius Ellis
Ruslan Chagaev W 6 Sedreck Fields
Donnell Holmes KO 1 Shane Hykes
Alexander Dimitrenko KO 5
Sam Ubokane
Billy Douglas KO 3 Toby Vaughn

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Diego Corrales hooks Joel Casamayor in an important junior lightweight fight

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Arthur Williams KO 1 Marcus Harvey
Jorge Castro KO 2 Arturo Rivera
Enzo Macarinelli KO 8 Garry Delaney
Vincenzo Rossitto W 12
Manuel Lee Ossie
Baldwin Hlongwane KO 8
Alexander Petkovic
Johnny Jensen W 6 Terry McGroom
David Izegwire W 8 Greg Wright
Chad Van Sickle KO 1 Jonathon Williams

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Thomas Ulrich W 12 Michael Rush
Paul Briggs W 12 Jesus Ruiz
Hugo Garay W 12 Sergio Beaz
Kamel Amrane KO 6 Doulyassad Joubij
Thomas Reid W 8 James Butler
Kai Kurzawa KO 2 Craig Cummings
Robert Stieglitz KO 7 Galen Brown
John Vargas KO 9 Carlton Holland
Allen Green KO 3 Laverne Clark

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Markus Beyer W 12 Andre Thysse
(Retains WBC Title)
Joe Calzaghe KO 7 Mger Mkrtchyan
Mario Veit W 10 Sergey Karanevic
Vitali Tsypko W 12 Charles Adamu
Manu Ntoh W Disq. 2 Vitaliy Kopytko

Jackson Chanet W 8 Andile Tshongolo
Jean-Paul Mendy W 8 Simon Mokoena
Levan Easley W 6 Shannon Miller

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bert Schenk W 8 Lorant Szabo
Sam Soliman KO 7 Jorge Sclarandi
Jorge Sendra KO 3 Antonio Quicanga
Franck Mezaache W 10 Hassine Cherifi
Hector Velazco W 8 Ramon Britez
Anthony Farnell KO 3 Lawrence Murphy
Troy Rowland W 10 Manning Galloway
Mariano Carrera KO 3 Juan Italo Meza
Gary Lockett KO 2 Keshnick Qato
Willie Gibbs KO 9 Glen Rayburn
Enrique Andrade KO 3 R.J. Karsten
Ottavio Barone KO 3 Ata Dogan
Dorian Beaupierre W 8 Dante Craig
Jose Luis Zertuche KO 1 Josh Onyango
George Walton W 8 Adrian Lopez
Denis Saioni KO 2 Antoine Lojocano
Sechew Powell KO 1 Kirk Douglas

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Verno Phillips KO 1 Julio Garcia
Tokunbo Olajide KO 2 Larry Marks
Shannan Taylor W 12 Paulo Sanchez
Jimmy Colas W 8 Christophe Canclaux
Jimmy Lange KO 7 Gabriel Rodriguez
Reda Zam Zam KO 2 Maurice Brantley
Grady Brewer KO 3 Anthony Thompson
Thomas McDonagh KO 2
Bobby Banghar
Freddie Cuevas W 8 Verdell Smith
Pablo Navasques Tech. Win 5
Jaume Pons
Toshiharu Kaneyama KO 5
Yukiharu Shinyashiki
Said Ouali W 6 Franco Ogentho
Archak Ter-Meliksetian KO 2
Jose Juan Mendiola

WELTERWEIGHTS

Thomas Damgaard Tech. Win 5
Christopher Henry
Jose Luis Castillo KO 2 Derrick Parks
Jawaid Khaliq W 12 Ener Julio
Carlos Quintana KO 3 Edwin Cassiani
Mikhail Krivolapov KO 6 Pavel Melnikov
Oscar Diaz W 8 Jaime Morales
Stephane Jacob W 8 Monney Seka
Marty Jakubowski KO 2 John Hoffman
Steve Ham KO 6 Jose Almanzar

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Miguel Cotto KO 4 Victoriano Sosa
Lovemore Ndou KO 4 Kiatchai 13 Coins
Cesar Bazan W Disq. 2 Roberto Ortega
Kelson Pinto KO 2 Jose Otavio DaSilva
Muhammad Abdullaev W Disq. 9
Richard Reina
Emmanuel Augustus D 8 Alvaro Aguilar
Noel Cortez KO 7 Eduardo Gomez
Rocky Katsidis W 10 Fred Kinuthia
Al Gonzales W 8 Jesse Feliciano
Karim Netchaoui KO 4
Emmanuel Fleury
Victor Castro KO 5 Dario Carlevaris
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. W 4 Oisin Fagan

LIGHTWEIGHTS

David Santos KO 1 Marty Robbins
Eleazar Contreras W 10
Ernesto Zepeda
Ricky Quiles W 12 Luis Villalta
Prawet Singwangcha KO 6
Soleh Sundava
Ulises Pena W 10 Sergio Macias
Keita Manabe W 10 Takashi Ijichi

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Erik Morales W 12 Jesus Chavez
(Wins WBC Title)
Diego Corrales W 12 Joel Casamayor
Ricardo Silva W 10 Julio Pablo Chacon
Mzonke Fana KO 6
Christian Sebastian Paz
Janos Nagy W 12 Kirkor Kirkorov
Ali Funeka W 12 Gabriel Phakula
Samuel Kebede W 8 Jus Wallie
Roy Rutherford KO 4 Steve Chinnock
Steven Luevano W 8 Armando Cordoba
Jose Reyes W 6 Juan Polo Perez

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Scott Harrison KO 5 Walter Estrada
Frankie Archuleta W 10 Johnny Tapia
Juan Carlos Ramirez W 10 Cesar Soto
Fernando Velardez KO 1 Pedro Mora
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym W 12
Jackson Asiku
Juan Ruiz W 12 Cristobal Cruz
Stephen Foster KO 6 Sean Hughes
Dazzo Williams W 12 Jamie McKeever
Robert Maldonado KO 9 Whyber Garcia
Daniel Ponce DeLeon KO 6
Cesar Figueroa
Al Seeger KO 2 Julio Oyuela
Jose Aguiniga W 6 Alberto Ontiveros

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Oscar Larios W 12 Shigeru Nakazato
(Retains WBC Title)
Joan Guzman KO 7 Agapito Sanchez
Salim Medjkoune W Disq. 3
Oscar Toscano
Nedal Hussein KO 1 Donny Suratin
Manabu Fukushima W 10
Yokthai Sithoar
Clarence Vinson KO 2 Roberto Chacon
Cuauhtemoc Vargas W 8
Francisco Tejedor

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom W 12
Toshiaki Nishioka
(Retains WBC Title)
Julio Zarate W 12 Hideki Todaka
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 5 Moises Zamudio
Chatchai Sasakul W 10 Sunao Uno
Wladimir Sidorenko W 12
Moises Castro
Hozumi Hasegawa W 10
Detchsiam Sishphohdam
Hideyasu Ishihara KO 5
Saengcharoen Mahasapcondo

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Mark Johnson KO 4 Luis Bolano
Gerson Guerrero KO 8 Evaristo Primero
Daisuke Naito KO 2 Takahiro Uryu
Waenpetch Chuwatana W 12
Shin Ogata
Karim Quibir W 8 Gheorge Ghiompirica

FLYWEIGHTS

Omar Narvaez KO 3 Reginaldo Martins
Brian Viloria W 12 Juan Keb-Baas
Luis Maldonado KO 3 Oscar Arciniega
Andrea Sarritzu D 6
Christophe Rodriguez
Noriyuki Komatsu Tech. Win 8
Edgar Rodrigo

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Ulises Solis KO 2 Gabriel Munoz
Masato Hatakeyama W 10
Tatsuo Hayashida
Katsunari Takayama W 10
Kosuke Fujiwara

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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

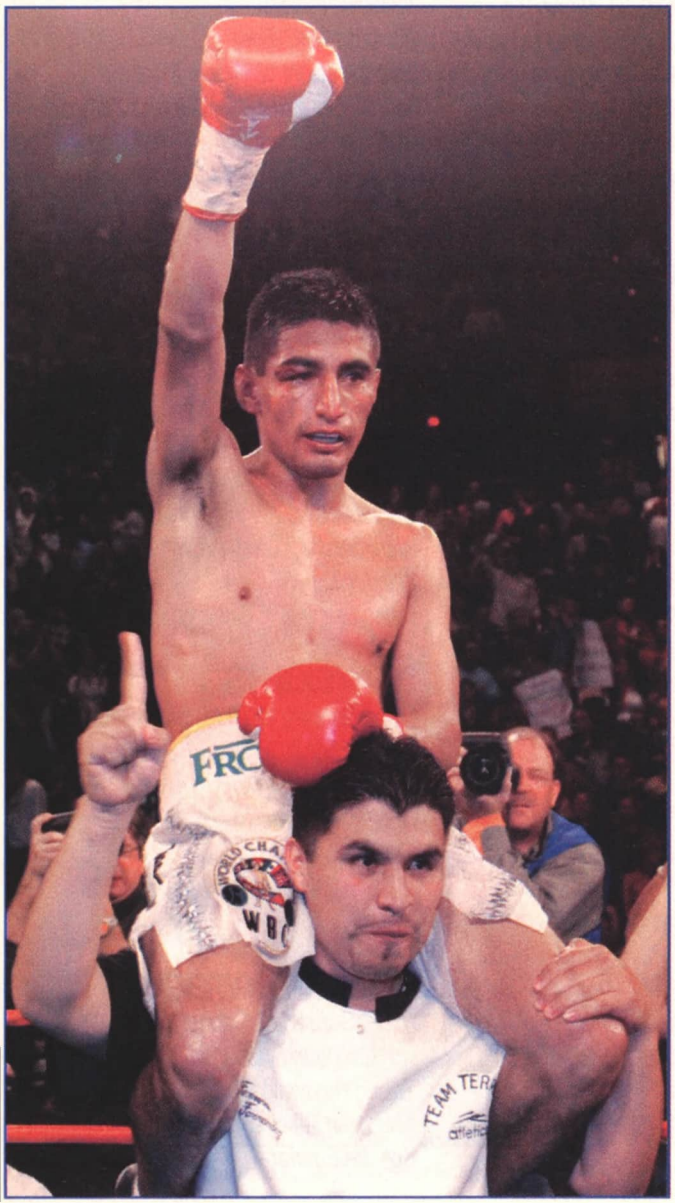

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

He may never surpass the accomplishments of the great Chavez, but Erik Morales at least pulled even with him in one respect by defeating a very good Chavez. With his unanimous decision victory over the tough and gutsy Jesus Chavez in February, Morales became only the second Mexican fighter ever to win major titles in three weight classes, joining the legendary Julio Cesar Chavez on that elite perch.

Fittingly, it was "J.C. Superstar" who wrapped the green belt around Morales' waist following the fight. But it was the other Chavez, "El Matador," who made Morales earn his newest title in a grueling, often thrilling battle. In the very first round, a right hand to the head left Morales reeling about as badly as we've ever seen him, but he gathered himself and stormed back to drop the normally iron-chinned Chavez twice in round two. From there, it was your classic war of attrition; Chavez was handicapped by an injured shoulder, Morales by a hurt hand, but neither would back down. They went back and forth over the final 10 rounds, and while Chavez claimed a moral victory, it was "El Terrible" who deservedly claimed his third title.

Back when Morales beat future Hall of Famer Daniel Zaragoza at age 21 for his first title, we began wondering if "the next Chavez" had arrived. The way he's going, we'll probably be looking for "the next Morales" when he's done.

• • • •

Erik Morales

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Miguel Cotto KO 4 Victoriano Sosa

Las Vegas, Nevada: Cotto, who is being hailed by many as boxing's next big superstar, lived up to expectations when he effortlessly disposed of the usually durable Sosa on the undercard of the Erik Morales-Jesus Chavez fight at the MGM Grand Garden Arena.

Both Cotto and Sosa had excellent amateur backgrounds, having represented their countries in the Olympic Games—Sosa in 1992 and Cotto in 2000—and this pedigree has helped mold them into the skillful fighters they are today. It was evident when they faced each other, however, that Cotto is the far more skillful of the two.

The Puerto Rican was also the larger of the two. The 5'8" Cotto, 140, was visibly heavier than the 5'9" Sosa, 139½, Dominican Republic, after unofficially gaining 13 pounds between the weigh-in and fight time. He unofficially outweighed Sosa by nine pounds in the ring, and like every punch, every pound counted.

Cotto, 23, began round one as the aggressor, keeping Sosa on the back foot, tucking in his chin to protect himself from the 29-year-old veteran's counters. Near the end of the round, Sosa landed some notable left uppercuts and wanted to trade with Cotto, but Cotto, 19-0 (16), demonstrated his power by landing his picture-perfect double left hook to Sosa's head and body almost at will.

Sosa, 37-4-2 (27), displayed his toughness in the second round by standing up to Cotto's punches and trading with him again, this time landing some telling left uppercuts. Sosa's effort reflected his previous gallant fights in which he had gone the distance with both Paul Spadafora and Floyd Mayweather. Even when Cotto came out of his corner for the third round looking for the knockout, Sosa admirably stood up to him. But he just could not match Cotto's classy performance.

The 8,094 fans were screaming with excitement in the fourth when Cotto dropped Sosa with a beautiful short left uppercut on the inside. Sosa beat the count and proceeded to go toe to toe with Cotto, landing some good shots of his own. Cotto stepped in once more and landed a left hook, dropping Sosa a second time. Sosa climbed off the canvas seemingly wanting more, and Cotto happily obliged. When a left to the body and a right to the head put Sosa down for the third and final time, referee Kenny Bayless (USA) had seen enough. He stepped in and stopped the action at 2:51 of the fourth round.

"I'm going to headline a championship fight this summer," the winner declared. "I was pleased with the way the fight ended."

Cotto looks destined for the highest level and said he doesn't care who they put in front of him because he trains hard and will be ready for anyone. A challenge for a version of the WBA belt held by the dangerous Vivian Harris (Kostya Tszyu holds the "super" title) could be just a couple of fights away.

Television: HBO
Promoter: Top Rank
(2-28-04)
Wayne McCullough

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Cotto rocks Sosa with his awesome left hook

Glencoffe Johnson W 12 Clinton Woods

Sheffield, England: All the years of being made to feel empty and hurt inside, all the heartbreak and pain with nothing to show for his honest labor and sweat, served as fuel for Johnson's fire. Finally, he prevailed in challenging for an IBF belt in his fourth attempt, a rematch against Woods at Ponds Forge Arena following their controversial draw last November. The unanimous decision that won him the vacant IBF light heavyweight title was just reward for a fight and career in which giving his best is all that he knows.

Johnson, 175, Miami, Florida, via Jamaica, felt that he had been robbed in that November '03 meeting with Woods, 175, England. "I do what I do to feed my children, and they took the food from their mouths," Johnson said about the decision on the eve of the rematch.

If he had left room for doubt three months previous, there would be no doubt this time. Early on he penetrated the Englishman's defense with solid, discouraging blows, and throughout he was the aggressor. "He caught me early and I never really recovered," said Woods. In a few words, he summed up the fight.

Had he been able to keep his distance, Woods, 35-3-1 (21), might have engineered

a different outcome. When he utilized the jab, as he did in the opening round, he broke up Johnson's rhythm, but the problem for Woods was that Johnson, 40-9-2 (27), had a different strategy in mind. And he had the strength and will to make it work. A hard overhand right connected with Woods' jaw in the second round and shook him for the first time. He took the shot, but it registered, with him and with the 35-year-old Johnson.

The right hand got through again in the fourth, and Woods, 31, staggered back against the ropes, where Johnson punished him further with hard hooks to the body. The Jamaican's punches were clearly carrying more impact, emphasized by the weariness that had set in with Woods by the halfway point. Johnson, on the other hand, was proving to be relentless.

Woods did manage to turn the tide temporarily in the eighth, backing Johnson up and throwing quick bursts, punctuating his effort with a good short right to Johnson's chin and later a left hook. Johnson's pace, it seemed, had taken a toll on his work. But he removed any element of doubt in rounds 10 and 11, landing solid jabs and hooks and heavy right crosses, not allowing Woods to get set, taking the play away entirely, and knocking the hometown fighter into a neutral corner in the penultimate round with a hard left hook. The stoppage that Woods required in the last was never even a remote possibility. He was too far through, Johnson too inspired to be denied.

Some of those tough nights may have passed through Johnson's mind before the decision was announced: against Bernard Hopkins (the only man to stop him) in a challenge for the middleweight title, against Sven Ottke for the IBF super middleweight belt, debatable losses against Omar Sheika and Julio Gonzalez, and an unlucky draw against Daniel Judah. But on this night, all three judges rightly made him a clear winner. Ricardo Bays (USA) scored 116-112, while Ian John-Lewis (England) and Hilton Whitaker (USA) both scored 115-113. THE RING had it 116-113 for Johnson. The referee was Dave Parris (England).

"Nobody in boxing has taken the road I did, traveling all over the world fighting everybody, beating them, and then having it taken away from me," said an emotional winner. "I've always wanted to save up a college fund for my kids so that they can go to college, because I didn't. Winning the title will help me to do this."

A first defense against Welshman Joe Calzaghe, who is moving up from super middleweight, may be on tap for the summer.

"Joe Calzaghe is the guy at the top of our list," confirmed Johnson's manager, Henry Foster. "It's a big fight on both sides of the Atlantic."

Promoter: Dennis Hobson

(2-6-04)

Brian Doogan

Carl Thompson KO 9 Sebastian Rothman

Sheffield, England: A climactic conclusion, ebb and flow, determination and heart—this bout had it all. Thompson, 194, England, was on the ropes physically and figuratively when, at the end of the ninth, he unleashed a right to the jaw that sent Rothman, 190, South Africa via Israel, crashing face-first to the canvas for a classic come-from-behind knockout at Ponds Forge Arena.

Approaching his 40th birthday, Thompson, 32-6 (24), was not given too much chance of upsetting Rothman, 17-2-2 (12), a legitimate top-10 cruiserweight. "The Cat" had participated in some memorable fights before—two clashes against the inimitable Chris Eubank, another up-and-down war with Ezra Sellers—but his capacity to dig deep enough to pull out another such performance was not so much doubted as thought to be impossible.

"If I go down, I get up again," he said. "People don't realize what true heart is."

If Rothman had been able to execute his plan, Thompson's heart might have been rendered irrelevant. When he jabbed and moved and threw his accurate right cross at regular intervals, it was difficult for Thompson to engage him in the kind of close-quarters combat that would have paid dividends for him. Rothman, however, was a little too cocky, and his derisive smile only served as motivation for the old man who was determined, if he must, to go down fighting.

PHOTO BY ANDREW BUDD/ACTION IMAGES

Determined Johnson drills Woods with a right

PHOTO BY ANDREW BUDD/ACTION IMAGES

Rothman topples in a miracle finish for Thompson

"The more he smiled and sneered and talked to me, the more I loved it," said Thompson. "I knew I was getting to him."

But Rothman, 29, got to him in a big way at the very end of round four, a roundhouse right hand when Thompson was backed into a neutral corner landing on the Englishman's jaw and lowering him to his knees. Referee Richie Davies (England) issued the mandatory eight-count, and Thompson was thankful for the bell. It was within 10 seconds of being rung again to end the fifth, when Rothman landed Thompson in serious trouble once more with right crosses and a barrage of blows. Thompson was wilting, but got the leverage into a fierce right uppercut that nailed the South African on the chin and sent him reeling into the ropes, which were all that kept him on his feet as the bell went. Davies correctly tolled to eight before allowing Rothman to return to his corner.

Over the next few rounds, Thompson tired significantly. Rothman resumed his boxing from long range and was landing almost at will with the jab and with right hands over the top. But he was vulnerable all the time to the right hand himself because he carried his left hand so low. Somehow Thompson found the opening. He was eating up punches, seemingly powerless to stop them as the ninth round reached its end. Trapped on the ropes, he managed to bounce off them before throwing a jab followed by a one-two, the right hand landing squarely on the jaw of Rothman, who fell as if he had collided with a freight train. Incredibly, he was on his feet at eight, but his legs betrayed him, and as he staggered back against the ropes, Davies waved it off. The time was 2:57 of round nine.

"I made a mistake and he made me pay for it," said Rothman. It couldn't have been choreographed any better.

Promoter: Dennis Hobson

(2-6-04)

Brian Doogan

Sharmba Mitchell W 12 Lovemore Ndou

Atlantic City, New Jersey: Takoma Park, Maryland's Mitchell was more than willing to travel halfway across the world and take on world junior welterweight champ Kostya Tszyu in Moscow, Russia. Instead, the 34-year-old Mitchell only traveled about 175 miles, to Atlantic City, on the date for which the Tszyu fight had been scheduled, and came home with a minor belt and the ongoing hope of facing Tszyu later in the year.

In mid-January, Tszyu backed out of a February 7 title defense against Mitchell due to a shoulder injury suffered during training, leaving "The Little Big Man" to fight late replacement Ndou for the IBF "interim title." As it turned out, Mitchell was fortunate it was Ndou he was in there with and not Tszyu. Mitchell, 139, was stung by a number of flush punches from Ndou—who is a modest hitter compared to Tszyu—but kept his hands moving enough for the judges to award him a unanimous decision.

Ndou, 137, Australia via South Africa, landed most of the harder blows, especially in the last three rounds. However, most of Ndou's fine work seemed lost on the judges. Pierre Benoist (USA) scored it 117-112 for Mitchell, John Stewart (USA) had it a more reasonable 115-113, and Lindsay Tucker (USA) somehow saw it 118-110 for Mitchell, giving Ndou just two rounds. THE RING scored it a 114-114 draw, as did many other ringside observers.

Ndou, 36-6-1 (22), may have come into the bout a relative unknown, but he left knowing that he made a name for himself at junior welterweight.

"I deserved to win," Ndou, 33, said. "Look at his face and look at mine. I hope he gives me a rematch."

Despite what the judges' cards said, there was an ebb and flow to the bout. For the first two rounds, Mitchell, 53-3 (30), controlled the action, working his jab to the body and generally staying more active than Ndou. "The Black Panther," however, fought back in the third, using wide rights that repeatedly caught Mitchell in the face. Ndou, switching at times to southpaw, put effective combinations together in the fifth and punctuated the round with a left to the head.

Mitchell's pitty-pat style helped him seize a degree of control from the sixth through ninth rounds. The former WBA titlist wasn't landing anything hurtful, but he was clearly outworking his opponent. Then Ndou came battling back in the 10th, 11th, and 12th. Judges Tucker and Benoist both gave Mitchell the final round, despite Ndou landing the heavier punches and backing up Mitchell throughout most of the round.

"His right kept coming at me awkwardly, and sometimes I just got lackadaisical," Mitchell explained afterward. "Going into this,

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Mitchell and Ndou exchange fire

I was going to fight my fight, not fight his fight. But this is the toughest fight I've had since my comeback (following a loss to Tszyu in 2001). If I wasn't a warrior or a true champion, I wouldn't have dug as deep."

Earl Brown (USA) was the referee.

Television: Showtime

Promoter: Gary Shaw Productions

(2-7-04)

Joe Santoliquito

Joe Calzaghe KO 7 Mger Mkrtchian

Cardiff, Wales: In more ways than one, Calzaghe, 168, Wales, has outgrown the super middleweight division. Making weight for this bout was torturous, he confided. Naturally a big man, he walks around at about 195 pounds. But the lack of quality challengers at 168 pounds means he has to step up to make the big breakthrough. With long-time IBF titleholder Sven Ottke unwilling to meet him, he has been left to take on foes such as Mkrtchian, 167, Russia via Armenia, whom he dispatched with unsurprising ease at the Wales National Ice Rink.

The jump to light heavyweight will present him with new challenges. Calzaghe, 37-0 (30), appeared set to tackle new IBF titleholder Glencoffe Johnson as this issue went to bed. Roy Jones, Antonio Tarver, Julio Gonzalez, and Eric Harding will also be in his sights.

"I really believe that I am one of the top 10 pound-for-pound fighters in the world today and I mean to prove it beyond the doubt of anyone," Calzaghe said. "The best that the light heavyweight division has to offer is what I want to face. I'm willing to go to America to do it."

In the wake of Lennox Lewis' abdication of the heavyweight throne, Calzaghe has to rate as Britain's top current fighter. He has held the spurious WBO title, which he won from Chris Eubank, for more than six years, but his credentials are better underlined by his victories over former beltholders Byron Mitchell, Charles Brewer, and Robin Reid. Danny Green, the Australian who was controversially disqualified in a WBC title challenge against Markus Beyer last year, recently described Calzaghe as "head and shoulders above Ottke," and this has recently become the consensus view.

His quick hands and nimble footwork from the southpaw stance will be assets in the heavier weight class, and he is likely to carry his punch. This firepower proved far too imposing for Mkrtchian, 18-2 (13), a 27-year-old whose biggest win came against mediocre Freeman Barr of the Bahamas, whom he stopped in three rounds last year. But Mkrtchian had been stopped in two rounds by unbeaten Russian Denis Inkin in 2001 and was also held to a split decision by Vage Kocharyan in 2002, nonentities at the level at which Calzaghe competes.

The 31-year-old Welshman emphasized this from the first bell. He had Mkrtchian on the back foot early, a solid left uppercut forcing the challenger to give ground in the opening round and suggesting the prospect of another quick night's work. In the previous 18 months, Calzaghe had fought only four rounds, dispatching Americans Tocker Pudwill and Mitchell in two rounds each.

But Mkrtchian proved somewhat more resilient, surviving Calzaghe's initial onrush and another in the second before the Welshman settled into a more measured rhythm, utilizing his sharp right jab and picking punches that steadily eroded the Armenian's resistance. Mkrtchian tried to time a right hand counter several times and did manage to connect with a strong left to the jaw near the end of the fourth, but Calzaghe merely banged his face himself to show his opponent that he was unhurt.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe has his way with Mkrtchian

Calzaghe continued to inflict a steady beating until the seventh, when a flurry to the head and solid combination punches to the body preceded the ruthless application of two straight lefts. Mkrtchian went down, but was up before referee Paul Thomas of England had completed the mandatory eight-count. Still Mkrtchian seemed to make a conscious (and wise) decision that he had suffered enough, and interpreting his body language correctly, Thomas waved it over at 1:05 of the seventh.

Promoter: Sports Network

(2-21-04)

Brian Doogan

Markus Beyer W 12 Andre Thysse

Dresden, Germany: Perhaps Beyer had his fill of drama in his previous fight, a highly controversial disqualification win over Danny Green, for there was precious little that distinguished this encounter. The rounds were tediously similar and the result inevitable, the WBC super middleweight titleholder retaining his belt for the second time, by wide, unanimous decision at the Mehrzweckhalle in front of a sellout crowd of 3,800.

Dominating from round one with an accurate right jab, southpaw Beyer, 166¾, Germany, contented himself with scoring points from range, not even trying to convert his total control over Thysse, 167, South Africa, into an early night's work. This is not his way, as a career record of 29-1 (11) would suggest. But the infrequency with which he threw his left hand marred his performance and dissatisfied even him, which he emphasized especially when the subject of his scheduled June 5 rematch with Green was brought up.

"I've got to start thinking about this," said the 32-year-old German. "Fighting like this, I don't have a chance against Danny Green."

Green dismissed Beyer's apparent pessimism as merely an act, but added that their brutal meeting last December, in which the Australian floored Beyer twice, may have had a lasting effect on the German.

"He might just be playing mind games," Green said. "But I really don't have a lot to say about Markus Beyer. I think he is mentally scarred from when I fought him. I think that's why he was afraid to take any risks against Thysse."

Safety-first certainly seemed to be his strategy. Fortunately, he was in against a 34-year-old man with very average capabilities. Fellow southpaw Thysse, 14-3 (8), did enjoy one brief moment of significant success when he caught Beyer with a hard right hook to the jaw in the third round. Beyer took the punch well and avoided coming to any more harm for the duration of the round before reverting back to boxing, moving, and keeping Thysse at range.

Beyer's combination work was impressive enough, but the clear lack of passion overall was not aesthetically fulfilling.

"It didn't really bring people out of their seats," Beyer admitted.

The decision, however, was safe enough. Luis Escalona (USA) scored it 119-109, Kazuo Abe (Japan) 117-111, and Franco Ciminale (Italy) 117-112, all for Beyer. THE RING's card read 117-111 in the German's favor.

Green, who injured a hand on his way to stopping Canadian Eric Lucas for the WBC "interim" belt last December in Montreal, was due to face New Zealander Sean Sullivan on March 21 before going to Germany to meet Beyer for a second time. WBC President Jose Sulaiman declared that he considered Beyer and Green joint holders of the title. As ever with Sulaiman, confusion reigns. But the issue should be put beyond doubt when Beyer and Green square off again in June.

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland

(2-28-04)

Brian Doogan

Yodsanan Nanathachai KO 7 Ryuhei Sugita

Gifu, Japan: Hard-punching Thai southpaw Yodsanan, 130, kept the WBA 130-pound belt as he proved too powerful and pugnacious for Japanese challenger Sugita, 129½, dropping him with vicious combinations in the second en route to a well-received stoppage at 2:49 of the seventh session of a Sunday afternoon fight at Gifu Memorial Center. Shortly before the fight, Acelino Freitas vacated the "super" version of the WBA super featherweight title, making this Yodsanan's first defense since his lesser version became the only one recognized by the increasingly confusing WBA.

Yodsanan, 29, fought aggressively from the outset against Sugita, 27, who was circling to avert mixing it up in the opening canto. The second saw the lefty beltholder score with solid combinations and then explode a wicked right hook that sent Sugita sprawling to the deck. Yodsanan attempted to finish the affair in the third and fourth, but Sugita proved elusive, and also retaliated with a few straight rights.

The shorter but more muscular Yodsanan utilized his accurate southpaw jabs to control the pace in the fifth and sixth, showing his skills as well as his power. In the seventh, Yodsanan, 42-2-1 (35), caught Sugita, 25-2-2 (22), again with a barrage of punches, sending him reeling to the ropes, nearly out on his feet. Australian referee Derek Milham wisely called a halt to save the loser from further punishment. Through six rounds, judges Armando Garcia (USA) and Kwansoo Kim (Korea) both scored it 59-54, while Mikael Hook (Sweden) had it 60-53, all for the aggressive titlist.

Promoter: Hatanaka Promotions

(2-8-04)

Joe Koizumi ■

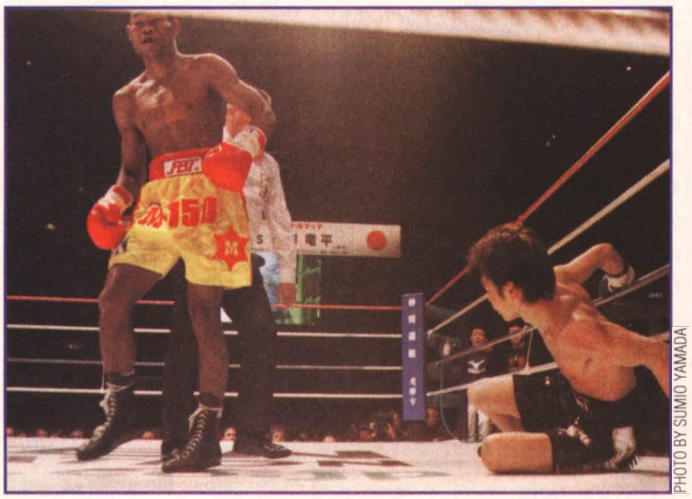

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Yodsanan floors Sugita in the second round

New Face

(Continued from page 22)

The 23-year-old junior middleweight kept his record spotless with a sixth-round stoppage of Sherwin Davis, who entered the fight with a 17-0 (11) slate that included a signature victory over 2000 U.S. Olympian Dante Craig. Having the fight shown on ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* was great exposure for Manfredo. And Manfredo didn't just beat Davis; "The Pride Of Providence" looked absolutely dominant doing it. Manfredo is counting on the career-best victory to provide larger outlets.

"Davis was my biggest challenge because he did beat Dante Craig," said Manfredo, who is an electrician during the day. "He was a big guy, six-feet tall, but I was well-prepared. I knew the guy had a good amateur background, and he worked with Shane Mosley when Shane was preparing for Vernon Forrest. I just wanted to prove myself as a fighter, and prove that I have the talent.

"There's more to come out of Providence other than Vinny Paz. When you first start, you get fed a lot of guys that you know you can beat. I knew I was fighting the right guys to build myself up. Boxing is all about timing."

The Davis victory couldn't have come at a better time for Manfredo, who, with a 20-month-old daughter named Alexis, was eager to start making his move. Still, Manfredo trained away from Providence and his baby girl for two weeks prior to meeting Davis, before coming home and working with super middleweight Scott Pemberton in the final days leading up to the fight.

"I'm really blessed with a good child, because she sleeps through the night and she goes to sleep on her own," Manfredo said, laughing. "I don't have to worry about getting up in the middle of the night or anything like that. Boxing is important for me, but my daughter is that much more important for me. Boxing is all about getting ahead in life. The most important thing, though, is getting that paycheck. I want to see what I can make. I have my job as an electrician to fall back on, but I love to do this."

That devotion comes from a deeply rooted family history in boxing. Peter Manfredo Sr., who trains his son, fought professionally, as did Manfredo's uncle, Steve Manfredo. But neither was as successful as Peter Jr. has been. As an example of how embedded boxing is in his family, Peter likes to refer to a baby picture of himself, sitting on his father's shoulders, with boxing gloves on.

"It's like I came out of the womb with boxing gloves," Manfredo said. "Boxing is like a drug in my family. We all like to fight, and it's something we want more and more of. It's in the blood."

Peter Sr. was a street tough, growing up in the Federal Hill area of Providence back when the mafia used to rule. But he didn't want his son growing up the same way—though Peter Jr. still had his share of street brawls in his youth.

"I just couldn't walk away. That's the way I was raised; there was no such thing as walking away if someone hit me," Manfredo said. "I had to hit them back. If I didn't fight back, I knew I'd get a worse beating from my dad. That's how it was. It was a good learning experience."

Manfredo was thrown into the ring at an early age. Each day after school, Peter Sr. would pick up his son, who would still be in his school uniform, and take him right over to the gym. While other six- and seven-year-old kids were playing pick-up basketball and football, Peter Jr. was hitting the heavybag, then doing his homework in his father's gym office after working out.

"Boxing was kind of forced on me," Manfredo said. "I wanted to do what other kids my age were doing, but all I was allowed to do was box. I guess my father was trying to live his dreams through me."

Still, Manfredo held no resentment toward his father, though his commitment to boxing was tested. There were a few times when his father tossed Peter out of the gym for not listening or for showing off in the ring for girls.

His passion for fighting, however, kept him coming back.

"I just love to fight; it's what I'm best at," Manfredo said. "I look back on all those times without any regrets. I kind of thank my father for what he did. He instilled the good things in me. We still go at it, and people in the gym really eat it up. But he wants to get the best out of me."

The one downfall Manfredo may have is that he is too much like his dad, a tendency that Peter Sr. constantly tries to curb. Peter Jr. had Olympic dreams, until the tough guy in him burst through. In his first amateur meeting against eventual Olympian Jermain Taylor, Manfredo tried to slug, which resulted in a stoppage loss and, according to Manfredo, the only time he's ever been seriously hurt in the ring. In their second meeting, Manfredo utilized his boxing skills, and did exceptionally well in losing a close decision.

"Peter sometimes gets too ballsy for his own good," the elder Manfredo said. "He's always trying to prove how tough he is, but when he works angles, when he's using his boxing skills, he's exceptional. He wants to stand there and slug, and I know he probably gets that from me. The thing is, I don't want to see that. I don't want to see Peter get beat up.

"He's gradually getting a little better and better. I know Peter can be a champion. I just don't want his heart and his balls to get in the way. I'm still tough on him. I'm constantly on him day and night. This is a tough business, but I think Peter can become a champion. He's a great kid. I couldn't be prouder of him."

When his amateur career was winding down, Manfredo thought seriously about giving up boxing. The politics and grind of the amateurs began to wear on him. All he had done since he was six was box. Manfredo was ready for a break.

"I thought about getting a job, and as far as boxing, I thought I was doing all of this for my father, and not for me at first," Manfredo said. "I wanted my father to be proud of me. It was tough to tell him that I was only planning to fight for a year or two in the pros."

A year or two has evolved into four. In the process, Manfredo has realized that he could make some money. And he's maintained a strong sense of what he wants from boxing amid the banging hammers of his day job, the clattering noise of the gym at night, and the sweet sound of his daughter's voice that wakes him up each morning.

"Just making it for my family," Manfredo said, "so my daughter could have whatever she wants, and my wife doesn't have to work anymore—that's what I want." ■

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Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

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May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, DeWitt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

May 1987: Hagler vs. Leonard—The Clash Of The Superstars: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Edwin Rosario. Interview: Greg Haugen. Also: Bobby Czyz, Tyson & Bonecrusher.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Aug. 1987: Sweet Victory! Sugar Ray Humbles Hagler. Color Pinup: Leonard vs. Hagler. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Spinks-Cooney preview, Donald Curry.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, light-weights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: *KO* Exclusive—Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Nov. 1991: Mike Tyson—The Only Heavyweight That Matters. Color Pinup: Thomas Hearns. Interview: Troy Dorsey. Also: Fenech-Nelson, James Toney, bodypunching.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

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June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

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Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

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June 1996: Destined For The Hall Of Fame: Who's In, Who's Out. Color Pinup: Wayne McCullough. Interview: Cedric Kushner. Also: Danny Romero, Mark Breland, Dynamite Dozen—the next 12.

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Feb. 1997: *KO*'s 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz

March 1997: Holyfield's Trainer Tells All! An Inside Look At The Upset Of The Year. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: George Foreman, Lupe Pintor, boxing bill, Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Sept. 1997: A Legitimate Grudge Match! Why Romero-Tapia Could Be The Fight Of The Year. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: David Tua. Also: Ike Quartey, George Foreman, top promoters.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Also: Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Dec. 1997: Johnny Tapia Outshines Danny Romero: The Defining Moment In A "Crazy Life." Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Frans Botha. Also: Lewis-Akiwande, Don King, Charles Brewer.

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Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

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Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

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Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

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Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

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July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

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Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

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Alphabet Ratings

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of January 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. John Ruiz (USA)
2. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
3. Corrie Sanders (SA)
4. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
5. Hasim Rahman (USA)
6. David Tua (NZ)
7. James Toney (USA)
8. Joe Mesi (USA)
9. Mike Tyson (USA)
10. Nicolay Valuev (RUS)
11. Lamon Brewster (USA)
12. Evander Holyfield (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Valery Brudov (RUS)
2. Vacant
3. Virgil Hill (USA)
4. O'Neil Bell (USA)
5. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
6. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
7. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
8. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
9. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Luis Pineda (PAN)
12. Kelvin Davis (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Silvio Branco (ITA)
1. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
2. Antonio Tarver (USA)
3. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
4. Bruno Girard (FRA)
5. George Jones (USA)
6. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
7. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
8. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
9. Stipe Drews (CRO)
10. David Telesco (USA)
11. Hugo Hernan Garay (ARG)
12. Montell Griffin (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
Champ: Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
1. Vacant
2. Manuel Siaca (PR)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
5. Jeff Lacy (USA)
6. Antwun Echols (USA)
7. Byron Mitchell (USA)
8. Brian Magee (GB)
9. Danilo Haussler (GER)
10. Nordin Ben-Salah (NETH)
11. Charles Brewer (USA)
12. Eric Lucas (CAN)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Robert Allen (USA)
4. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
5. Evans Ashira (DEN)
6. Jermain Taylor (USA)
7. Kingsley Ikeke (NIG)
8. Howard Eastman (GB)
9. William Joppy (USA)
10. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
11. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
12. Raymond Joval (NETH)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Shane Mosley (USA)
Champ: Travis Simms (USA)
1. Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
2. Fernando Vargas (USA)
3. Kassim Ouma (GHA)
4. Alejandro T. Garcia (MEX)
5. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
6. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
7. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
8. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
9. J.C. Candelo (COL)
10. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
11. Mikael Rask (DEN)
12. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
Champ: Jose Rivera (USA)
1. Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Vernon Forrest (USA)
5. Michael Trabant (GER)
6. Kermit Cintron (PR)
7. Farhad Bakirov (UZB)
8. Teddy Reid (USA)
9. Chris Smith (USA)
10. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
11. Hwanyung Park (KOR)
12. Alpaslan Aguzum (TUR)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Vivian Harris (GUY)
1. Miguel Cotto (PR)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
6. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
7. Andreas Kotelnik (GER)
8. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
9. Souleyman M'Baye (FRA)
10. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
11. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
12. Kelson Pinto (BRA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Juan Lazcano (USA)
3. Lakva Sim (MON)
4. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
5. Courtney Burton (USA)
6. Michael Clark (USA)
7. Julio Diaz (MEX)
8. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
9. Steve Johnston (USA)
10. Billy Irwin (CAN)
11. Juan Diaz (USA)
12. Pedro Miranda (SPA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
2. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
3. Randy Suico (PHIL)
4. Janos Nagy (HUN)
5. Michael Gomez (GB)
6. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
7. Nobuhito Honmo (JAP)
8. Nate Campbell (USA)
9. Mike Anchondo (USA)
10. Vicente Mosquera (PAN)
11. Diego Corrales (USA)
12. Edwin Valero (VEN)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
Champ: Chris John (INDO)
1. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
2. Injin Chi (KOR)
3. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
4. Derrick Gainer (USA)
5. Michael Brodie (GB)
6. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
7. Spend Abazi (DEN)
8. Victor Polo (COL)
9. Oscar Leon (COL)
10. William Abelyan (ARM)
11. Zahir Raheem (USA)
12. Orlando Salido (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
1. Vacant
2. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
3. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
4. Tim Austin (USA)
5. Osamu Sato (JAP)
6. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
7. Yober Ortega (VEN)
8. Paulie Ayala (USA)
9. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
10. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
11. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
12. Shoji Kimura (JAP)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
2. Poongsawat Krachingdaen (THAI)
3. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
4. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
5. Diego Morales (MEX)
6. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
7. Leo Gamez (VEN)
8. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
9. Daniel Ponce DeLeon (MEX)
10. Julio Zarate (MEX)
11. Sornpichai Kratingdaeng (THAI)
12. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Martin Castillo (MEX)
2. Luis Bolano (COL)
3. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
4. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
5. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
6. Jose Navarro (USA)
7. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
8. Ricardo Cordova (PAN)
9. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
10. Gabula Vabaza (SA)
11. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)
12. Kormith Eveready (THAI)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
1. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Eric Morel (USA)
4. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
5. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
6. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
7. Brian Viloria (USA)
8. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
9. Angel Priolo (COL)
10. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
11. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
12. Damaen Kelly (GB)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
3. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
4. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
5. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
6. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
7. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)
8. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
9. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
10. Fahlan Sakkreerin (THAI)
11. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
12. Yosam Choi (KOR)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)
1. Juan Landaeta (VEN)
2. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
3. Eriberto Gijon (PHIL)
4. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
5. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
6. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
7. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
8. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
9. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
10. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
11. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
12. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of February 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Corrie Sanders (SA)
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Joe Mesi (USA)
5. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
6. Fres Oquendo (USA)
7. Mike Tyson (USA)
8. James Toney (USA)
9. Jameel McCline (USA)
10. Hasim Rahman (USA)
11. Owen Beck (JAM)
12. Faruq Saleem (USA)
13. Dominick Guinn (USA)
14. Eliecer Castillo (CUB)
15. Derrick Jefferson (USA)
16. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
17. Lance Whitaker (USA)
18. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
19. Henry Akinwande (NIG)
20. Jeremy Williams (USA)
21. Dennis Bakhtov (KAZ)
22. Saul Montana (MEX)
23. Sinan Samil San (TUR)
24. Michael Sprott (GB)
25. Danny Williams (GB)
26. Samuel Peter (NIG)
27. Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)
28. Peter Okhello (UGA)
29. Kevin McBride (IRE)
30. Kali Meehan (NZ)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
1. O'Neil Bell (USA)
2. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
3. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
4. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
5. Dale Brown (CAN)
6. Rydell Booker (USA)
7. Rudiger May (GER)
8. Pavel Melkomian (RUS)
9. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
10. Carl Thompson (GB)
11. Glen Kelly (AUSTRL)
12. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
13. Virgil Hill (USA)
14. Kelvin Davis (USA)
15. Louis Azille (DR)
16. Valery Brudov (RUS)
17. Sebastiaan Rothman (SA)
18. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
19. Richard LaMontagne (USA)
20. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
21. Vincenzo Rossitto (ITA)
22. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
23. Felix Cora (USA)
24. Ezra Sellers (USA)
25. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
26. Mark Hobson (GB)
27. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
28. Michael Simms (USA)
29. Jorge Kahwagi (MEX)
30. Mauro Ordiales (ARG)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
3. Stipe Drews (CRO)
4. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
5. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
6. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
7. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
8. Jesus Ruiz (MEX)
9. George Jones (USA)
10. Julio Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Dan Batchelder (USA)
12. Eric Harding (USA)
13. Montell Griffin (USA)
14. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
15. Matthew Barney (GB)
16. Donnell Wiggins (USA)
17. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
18. Orlando Rivera (PR)
19. Laudelino Barros (BRA)
20. Tony Oakey (GB)
21. Peter Oboh (GB)
22. Robert Stieglitz (GER)
23. Hugo Garay (ARG)
24. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
25. Sergey Karanevich (RUS)
26. Rico Hoye (USA)
27. Paul Murdoch (AUSTRL)
28. Adrian Diaconu (CAN)
29. Prince Badi Ajamu (USA)
30. Yusef Mack (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Markus Beyer (GER)
Interim Champ: Danny Green (AUSTRL)
1. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
2. Eric Lucas (CAN)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Jeff Lacy (USA)
6. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
7. Charles Brewer (USA)
8. Scott Pemberton (USA)
9. Brian Magee (GB)
10. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
11. Kabary Salem (EGY)
12. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
13. Antwun Echols (USA)
14. Robin Reid (GB)
15. Andre Thysse (SA)
16. Henry Porras (CR)
17. Otis Grant (CAN)
18. Mario Veit (GER)
19. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
20. Enrique Ornelas (USA)
21. Willie Stewart (USA)
22. Librado Andrade (USA)
23. Victor Oganov (RUS)
24. Carmine Tufano (USA)
25. Manny Siaca (PR)
26. Charles Adamu (GHA)
27. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
28. Vitaly Tsypko (UKR)
29. Mger Mkrtchian (ARM)
30. Jackson Chanet (FRA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Howard Eastman (GB)
2. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
3. Jermain Taylor (USA)
4. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
5. Evans Ashira (KEN)
6. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
7. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
8. Eric Mitchell (USA)
9. Robert Allen (USA)
10. Raymond Joval (HOL)
11. Sergey Tatevosyan (RUS)
12. Quentin Smith (USA)
13. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
14. Epifanio Mendoza (COL)
15. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
16. Bert Schenk (GER)
17. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
18. Mariano Carrera (ARG)
19. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
20. Leonard Pierre Anastan (HAI)
21. Yoshinori Araki (JAP)
22. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
23. Wayne Alexander (GB)
24. Chad Dawson (USA)
25. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
26. Alexey Chirkov (RUS)
27. James Obedi Toney (GHA)
28. Tokutaro Toyozumi (JAP)
29. Jesse Brinkley (USA)
30. Anthony Bonsante (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Shane Mosley (USA)
Interim Champ: Javier Castillejo (SPA)
1. Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
2. Fernando Vargas (USA)
3. Kassim Ouma (USA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Alex Bunema (USA)
6. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
7. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
8. Marco Antonio Rubio (MEX)
9. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
10. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
11. J.C. Candelo (COL)
12. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)
13. Raul Marquez (USA)
14. Toshiharu Kaneyama (JAP)
15. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
16. Jamie Moore (GB)
17. Alejandro Garcia (MEX)
18. Nobuhiro Hishida (JAP)
19. Richard Williams (GB)
20. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
21. Mehrdud Takaloo (GB)
22. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
23. Rodney Jones (USA)
24. Julio Garcia (CUB)
25. Joachim Alcine (CAN)
26. Jose Luis Zertuche (MEX)
27. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
28. Michael Rask (DEN)
29. Carlos Bojorquez (USA)
30. Guillermo Saputo (ARG)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
1. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
2. Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)
3. Vernon Forrest (USA)
4. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
5. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
6. Miguel Rodriguez (MEX)
7. Teddy Reid (USA)
8. Hiroshi Watanabe (JAP)
9. Alpaslam Aguzum (TUR)
10. Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Ishe Smith (USA)
12. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
13. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
14. Rafael Pineda (COL)
15. Michel Trabant (GER)
16. Frederic Klose (FRA)
17. Christian Bladt (DEN)
18. Jorge Lujan (ARG)
19. Joseph Makaringe (SA)
20. Kermit Cintron (USA)
21. Farkhad Bakirov (UZB)
22. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
23. Eamonn Magee (GB)
24. Michele Orlando (ITA)
25. Anthony Thompson (USA)
26. Randall Bailey (USA)
27. James Hare (GB)
28. Chris Smith (USA)
29. Edwin Cassiani (COL)
30. Joshua Clottey (GHA)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Emeritus Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Arturo Gatti (CAN)
1. Leonard Dorin (CAN)
2. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
3. Paul Spadafora (USA)
4. Ricky Hatton (GB)
5. Miguel Cotto (PR)
6. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
7. James Leija (USA)
8. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
9. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
10. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
11. Junior Witter (GB)
12. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
13. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
14. Kelson Pinto (BRA)
15. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
16. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
17. Michael Stewart (USA)
18. Victor Kpadenue (GHA)
19. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
20. Alvaro Aguilar (MEX)

21. Juan Carlos Rodriguez (MEX)
22. Jose Areli Lopez (MEX)
23. Carlos Maussa (COL)
24. Andreas Kotelnik (UKR)
25. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
26. Eduardo Gomez (MEX)
27. Muhammad Abdullaev (UZB)
28. Salvatore Battaglia (ITA)
29. David Diaz (USA)
30. Shingo Eguchi (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
3. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
4. Juan Diaz (MEX)
5. Phillip Ndou (SA)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Julio Diaz (USA)
8. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
9. Michael Clark (USA)
10. Yuri Romanov (UKR)
11. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
12. Jason Cook (GB)
13. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
14. Matt Zegan (POL)
15. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
16. Aldo Rios (ARG)
17. Artur Grigorian (UZB)
18. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
19. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
20. David Burke (GB)
21. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
22. Alex Trujillo (PR)
23. Graham Earl (GB)
24. Courtney Burton (USA)
25. Antonio Pitalua (COL)
26. Ricardo Silva (ARG)
27. Billy Irwin (CAN)
28. Eleazar Contreras (USA)
29. Ameth Diaz (PAN)
30. Rolando Reyes (USA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jesus Chavez (USA)
1. Mzonke Fana (SA)
2. Randy Suico (PHIL)
3. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
4. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
5. Zahir Raheem (USA)
6. Mike Anchondo (USA)
7. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
8. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)
9. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
10. Janos Nagy (HUN)
11. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
12. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
13. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
14. Nate Campbell (USA)
15. Orlando Salido (MEX)
16. Diego Corrales (USA)
17. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
18. Edwin Valero (VEN)
19. Goyo Vargas (MEX)
20. Daniel Dominguez (MEX)
21. Steve Luevano (USA)
22. Michael Gomez (GB)
23. Jose Cotto (PR)
24. Craig Docherty (GB)
25. Cesar Soriano (MEX)
26. Justin Juuko (UGA)
27. Alex Arthur (GB)
28. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
29. Bobby Pacquiao (PHIL)
30. Koba Gogaladze (GEO)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Emeritus Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Michael Brodie (GB)
3. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
4. Rocky Juarez (USA)
5. Humberto Soto (MEX)
6. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
7. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
8. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
9. William Abelyan (USA)
10. Spend Abazi (DEN)
11. Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)
12. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
13. Guty Espadas (MEX)
14. Luis Fuente (MEX)
15. Osamu Sato (JAP)
16. Valdemir Pereira (BRA)
17. Willie Jorrin (USA)
18. Whyber Garcia (PAN)
19. Jorge Solis (MEX)
20. Vuyani Bungu (SA)
21. Derrick Gainer (USA)
22. Nicky Cook (GB)
23. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
24. Juan Gerardo Cabrera (ARG)
25. Dainoshin Kuma (JAP)
26. Takalani Ndlovu (SA)
27. Ismael Gonzalez (MEX)
28. Eiichi Sugama (JAP)
29. Carlos Gamez (MEX)
30. Gamaliel Diaz (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar Larios (MEX)
1. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
2. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
3. Napapol Kiattisakchocchoi (THAI)
4. Shigeru Nakazato (JAP)
5. Yoshikane Nakajima (JAP)
6. Daniel Ponce (MEX)
7. Jimrex Jaca (PHIL)
8. Jose Rojas (VEN)
9. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
10. Paulie Ayala (USA)
11. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)
12. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
13. Jorge Linares (VEN)
14. Seungsok Chae (KOR)
15. David Donis (USA)
16. Hector Julio Avila (DR)
17. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
18. Art Simonyan (USA)
19. Gabula Vabaza (SA)
20. Fernando Beltran Jr. (MEX)
21. Esham Pickering (GB)
22. Ruben Estanislao (MEX)
23. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
24. Cuauhtemoc Vargas (MEX)
25. Adolfo Landeros (MEX)
26. Sammy Ventura (MEX)
27. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
28. Sergio Medina (ARG)
29. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
30. Michael Hunter (GB)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Diego Morales (MEX)
3. Genaro Garcia (USA)
4. Hozumi Hasegawa (JAP)
5. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
6. Julio Zarate (MEX)
7. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
8. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
9. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
10. Vusi Malinga (SA)
11. David Guerault (FRA)
12. Noel Wilders (GB)
13. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
14. Julio Cesar Avila (MEX)
15. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
16. Silence Mabuza (SA)
17. Khulile Makeba (SA)
18. Moises Castro (NIC)
19. Steve Molitor (CAN)
20. Jorge Lacierva (MEX)
21. Saenghiran Lookbanyai (THAI)
22. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
23. Sasha Baktin (RUS)
24. Wladimir Sidorenko (UKR)
25. Miguel Angel Munguia (MEX)
26. Akihiko Nago (JAP)
27. Nathan Sting (AUSTRL)
28. Eduardo Escobedo (MEX)
29. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
30. Cesar Morales (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Jose Navarro (USA)
2. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
3. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
4. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
5. Luis Bolano (COL)
6. Martin Castillo (MEX)
7. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
8. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
9. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
10. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
11. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
12. Joven Jorda (PHIL)
13. Peter Culshaw (GB)
14. Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)
15. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
16. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
17. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
18. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
19. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
20. Shin Ogata (JAP)
21. Gerson Guerrero (MEX)
22. Raul Juarez (MEX)
23. Jose Beranza (MEX)
24. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)
25. Sergio Perez (MEX)
26. Karim Quibir (SPA)
27. Jason Booth (GB)
28. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
29. Zcy Gorres (PHIL)
30. Cesar Lopez (USA)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Noriyuki Komatsu (JAP)
4. Brian Viloria (USA)
5. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
6. Jair Jimenez (COL)
7. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
8. Eric Morel (PR)
9. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
10. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
11. Koji Koyama (JAP)
12. Vic Darchinyan (AUSTRL)
13. Diosdado Gabi (PHIL)
14. Angel Priolo (COL)
15. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
16. Masaki Nakanuma (JAP)
17. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
18. Carlos Bouchan (MEX)
19. Damaen Kelly (GB)
20. Edgar Sosa (MEX)
21. Raul Eliseo Medina (ARG)
22. Jose Lopez Bueno (SPA)
23. Steffen Norskov (DEN)
24. Yusuke Morishima (JAP)
25. Julio Ler (ARG)
26. Gabriel Elizondo (USA)
27. Jose Araiza (MEX)
28. Luis Angel Martinez (MEX)
29. Atsushi Mando (JAP)
30. Mercurio Ciaramitaro (ITA)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jorge Arce (MEX)
1. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
2. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
3. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
4. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
5. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
6. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
7. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
8. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
9. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
10. Ulises Solis (MEX)
11. Yosam Choi (KOR)
12. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
13. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
14. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
15. Hugo Ramirez (MEX)
16. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
17. Omar Nino (MEX)
18. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
19. Monelisi Myekeni (SA)
20. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
21. Hugo Cazares (MEX)
22. Carlos Fajardo (NIC)
23. Javier Lagos (MEX)
24. Juan Centeno (NIC)
25. Bert Batawang (PHIL)
26. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
27. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
28. Jose Lopez (PR)
29. Nobuaki Masuda (JAP)
30. Munetsugu Kayo (JAP)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Eagle Akakura (JAP)
1. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
2. Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
3. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
4. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
5. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
6. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
7. Mohamed Rachman (INDO)
8. Juan Palacios (NIC)
9. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
10. Oledong Sithsanerchai (THAI)
11. Armand de la Cruz (PHIL)
12. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
13. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
14. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
15. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
16. Omar Soto (MEX)
17. Pornsawan Porpramook (THAI)
18. Teruo Misawa (JAP)
19. Francisco Rosas (MEX)
20. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
21. Namchai Ratanachaigym (THAI)
22. Ricardo San Martin (MEX)
23. Gerardo Verde (MEX)
24. Iwan Key (INDO)
25. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
26. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
27. Nkosinathi Joyi (SA)
28. Shunsuke Nagao (JAP)
29. Valentin Leon (MEX)
30. Emilio Aguelican (MEX)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of January 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Chris Byrd (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
5. Fres Oquendo (USA)
6. Jameel McCline (USA)
7. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
8. James Toney (USA)
9. Hasim Rahman (USA)
10. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
11. Juan Carlos Gomez (USA)
12. Mike Tyson (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Kelvin Davis (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
4. Ezra Sellers (USA)
5. O'Neil Bell (USA)
6. Virgil Hill (USA)
7. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
8. Alex Petkovic (RUS)
9. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Louis Azille (USA)
12. Ravea Springs (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. Antonio Tarver (USA)
5. Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
6. Montell Griffin (USA)
7. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
8. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
9. Richard Hall (USA)
10. Dariusz Michalczewski (POL)
11. Stipe Drews (CRO)
12. Tomasz Adamek (POL)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Charles Brewer (USA)
5. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
6. Danilo Haussler (GER)
7. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
8. Jeff Lacy (USA)
9. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
10. Mario Veit (GER)
11. Byron Mitchell (USA)
12. Antwun Echols (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Raymond Joval (HOL)
3. Evans Ashira (GUY)
4. Bert Schenk (GER)
5. Jermain Taylor (USA)
6. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
7. Angel Hernandez (USA)
8. Derrell Coley (USA)
9. Bea Diallo (LIB)
10. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
11. Howard Eastman (GB)
12. Aaron Mitchell (USA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Kassim Ouma (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Verno Phillips (USA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Vernon Forrest (USA)
6. J.C. Candelo (USA)
7. Fernando Vargas (USA)
8. Julio Garcia (USA)
9. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
10. Emmett Linton (USA)
11. Alex Bunema (USA)
12. Bronco McKart (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Teddy Reid (USA)
4. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
5. Rafael Pineda (COL)
6. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
7. Kermit Cintron (USA)
8. Jose Celaya (USA)
9. James Hare (ENG)
10. Christian Bladt (DEN)
11. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
12. Joe Hutchinson (USA)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Mike Stewart (USA)
4. Omar Weis (ARG)
5. Arturo Gatti (USA)
6. Miguel Cotto (USA)
7. James Leija (USA)
8. Ricky Hatton (ENG)
9. Lovemore Ndou (AUSTRL)
10. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
11. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
12. Paul Spadafora (USA)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Javier Jauregui (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Levander Johnson (USA)
5. Courtney Burton (USA)
6. Julio Diaz (USA)
7. Michael Clark (USA)
8. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
9. Angel Manfredy (USA)
10. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
11. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
12. Steve Johnston (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Carlos Hernandez (USA)
1. Joel Casamayor (USA)
2. Nate Campbell (USA)
3. Steve Forbes
4. Diego Corrales (USA)
5. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
6. Sirimongkol Singmanassak (THAI)
7. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
8. David Santos (USA)
9. Phillip Ndou (SA)
10. Janos Nagy (HUN)
11. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
12. Edelmiro Martinez (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Orlando Salido (MEX)
4. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
5. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
6. William Abelyan (USA)
7. Zahir Raheem (USA)
8. Rocky Juarez (USA)
9. In Jin Chi (KOR)
10. Victor Polo (COL)
11. Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym (THAI)
12. Humberto Soto (MEX)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
2. Vacant
3. Paulie Ayala (USA)
4. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
5. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
7. David Donis (USA)
8. Art Simonyan (USA)
9. Diego Morales (MEX)
10. Fahsung 3K Battery (THAI)
11. Fernando Velardez (USA)
12. Walter Estrada (COL)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Rafael Marquez (MEX)
1. Pete Frissina (USA)
2. Tim Austin (USA)
3. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
4. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
5. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
6. David Guerault (FRA)
7. Jorge Lacierva (USA)
8. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
9. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
10. Mauricio Pastrana (PAN)
11. Jose Aguiniga (USA)
12. Roger Gonzalez (USA)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Luis Perez (NIC)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Luis Bolano (COL)
4. Martin Castillo (MEX)
5. Jose Navarro (USA)
6. Felix Machado (VEN)
7. Peter Culshaw (ENG)
8. Jason Booth (ENG)
9. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
10. Julio Zarate (MEX)
11. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
12. Oscar Andrade (MEX)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vic Darchinian (AUSTRL)
2. Vacant
3. Jair Jimenez (COL)
4. Damaen Kelly (GB)
5. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
6. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
7. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
8. Eric Morel (PR)
9. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
10. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
11. Angel Priolo (COL)
12. Hawk Makepula (SA)

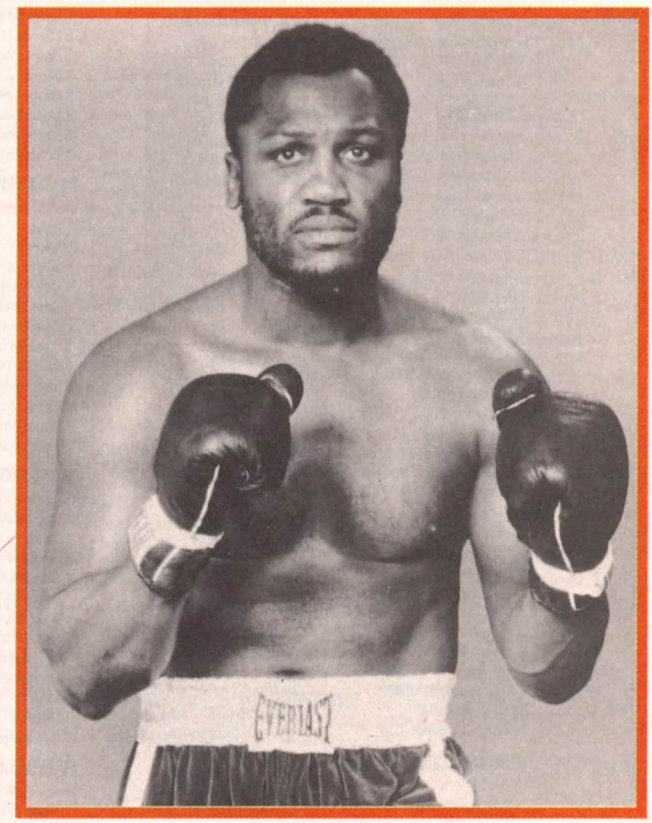
JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Burgos (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
4. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
5. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
6. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
7. Yosam Choi (KOR)
8. Tatsuo Hatashida (JAP)
9. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
10. Roberto Vasquez (PAN)
11. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
12. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Daniel Reyes (COL)
1. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
2. Vacant
3. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
4. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
5. Pichit Siriwat (THAI)
6. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
7. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
8. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
9. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
10. Juan Palacios (NIC)
11. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
12. Eriberto Gejon (PHIL)

CLASSIC

From THE RING, October 1969

"How I Will Destroy Ellis!"



By Joe Frazier

I have been asked by THE RING, which has been very fair in the heavyweight situation, to discuss, "How I Will Destroy Ellis," as my suggested topic.

I will destroy him. You may take that for granted. I say this with no desire to call anybody names, to minimize Jimmy's class as a contender, or to give the impression that he does not belong in the same ring with me.

The fact remains that Ellis was the winner of a tournament, in which he outclassed Jerry Quarry, Oscar Bonavena, Karl Mildenberger, Thad Spencer, and Leotis Martin. I refused to enter this tournament because I regarded it as strictly manufactured, with the main objective a big financial return for the promoters, and as many boxers as they could crowd into the elimination, eligible or not.

I refused to concede that some of the tournament entries were in my class.

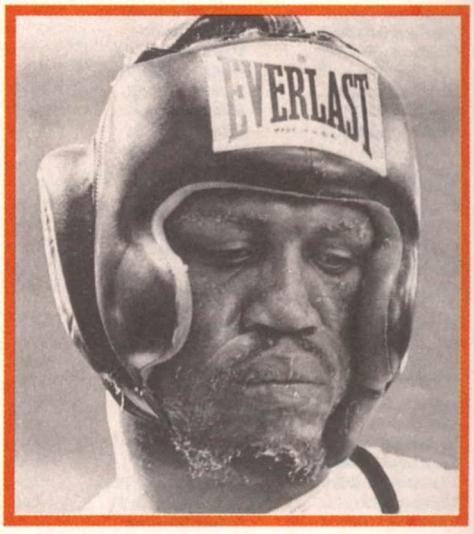
The WBA, which approved the tournament, tried hard to insult me by rating me number seven among the top 10 heavyweights. This stupid action helped me. It drew greater attention to Joe Frazier, and started comparisons with the elimination field, which did the WBA and the promoters no good at all.

Have you noticed that the promoters never have issued a statement of financial profits? Will they tell me again that I should have been in the tournament?

I will destroy Ellis as a heavyweight contender. And, if circumstances free Cassius Clay for a return to the ring, especially after his long layoff, I will dump him into the limbo of the discards. I am looking at Clay while I prepare for Ellis.

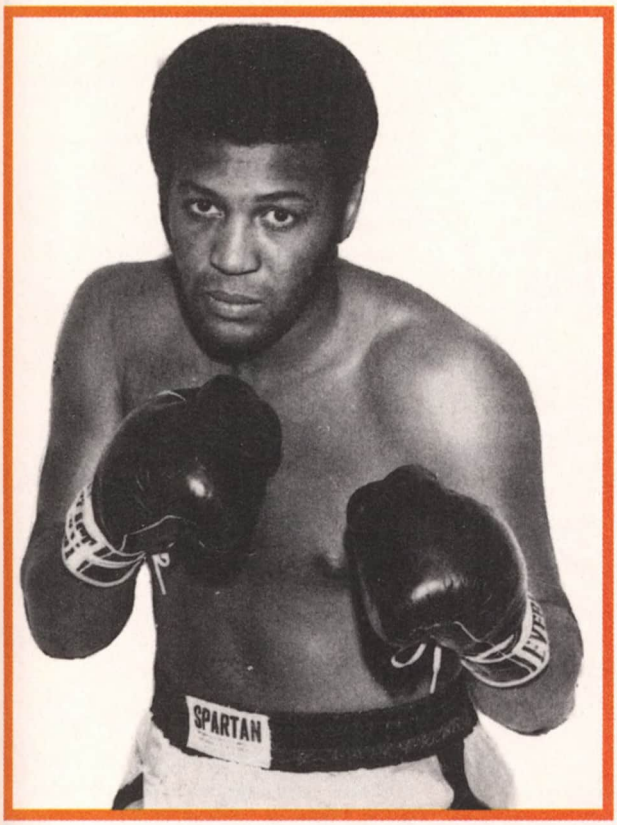
How will I destroy Ellis? If you saw me knock out Jerry

(Continued on page 90)



Frazier prepared for Ellis wearing the grim look he wanted to confront Muhammad Ali with. Despite not participating in the WBA's tournament, Frazier, recognized as the New York State champion, was going to get his chance at the belt.

"Frazier Is In For A Big Surprise!"



By Jimmy Ellis

Joe Frazier is in for a big surprise. He has not proved that he can beat my type of fighter. Let me say one thing. I am the world's heavyweight champion, and Joe Frazier, who's been doing a lot of talking, is nothing but a challenger.

I'm not saying that Frazier is a bad fighter. He is a good one, strong and aggressive. But it doesn't matter to me if six states and some foreign countries want to call Frazier the heavyweight champion. I know better. Still, there is this controversy about the heavyweight championship. So I think the people would like to see a Frazier-Ellis match, and I'm the one right now who is looking to give it to them.

Frazier's talking about how he wants a little rest after beating Jerry Quarry. Well, at one time, after I beat Floyd Patterson and had to have surgery on my broken nose, I said I wanted a little rest—and people really thought I was scared of Frazier. But I just want everybody to know now that I'm ready for Joe Frazier—but Joe Frazier, I think, is not ready for me.

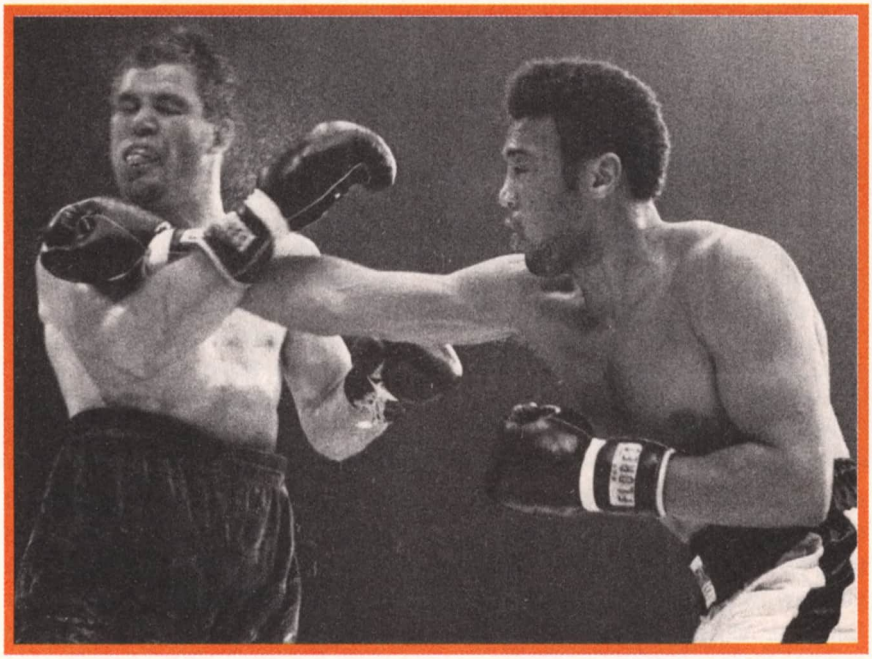
I've seen Frazier fight five or six times on television. I saw him in person only once, when he fought Quarry. He's an aggressive fighter. He likes to come in and throw a lot of leather. I've watched this throughout his fights. He fights the same pattern.

To my way of thinking, this is the pattern: He tries to wear down his man in the early rounds so he can move in for the kill in the later rounds. He's a Philadelphia style of fighter, always coming at you, rocking from side to side.

I'll beat Frazier by turning his strengths—aggressiveness, eagerness—into weaknesses. By that, I mean I'll make him fight my kind of fight. I'm going to make him move in circles. I won't let him just sit still and throw his punches like he really wants to throw them. I expect to let him wear himself out in the early rounds. I'm going to do what they call the counter after what he's been doing. I'm going to let him wear himself out in the early rounds. And then I'll come on in the last rounds and burn him out.

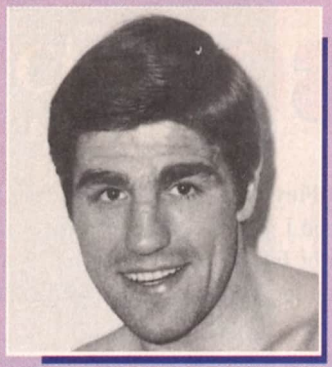
I thought Quarry did a good thing in the first round of their fight. I could see him coming out and punching that way. He did it to let Frazier know, *Don't come out and try to bulldoze me*

(Continued on page 91)



Ellis said maintaining his style enabled him to beat Jerry Quarry. "If I can pull a man into my style, then I have the man trapped. And if he pulls me into his style, then he's got me trapped," Ellis stated.

THE RING RATINGS, October 1969



Nino Benvenuti

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Cassius Clay, Houston, TX
1. **Joe Frazier,** Philadelphia, PA
2. **Jimmy Ellis,** Louisville, KY
3. **Sonny Liston,** Las Vegas, NV
4. **Jerry Quarry,** Los Angeles, CA
5. **Oscar Bonavena,** Argentina
6. **Leotis Martin,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Henry Cooper,** England
8. **Mac Foster,** Fresno, CA
9. **Buster Mathis,** Grand Rapids, MI
10. **Al Jones,** Perrine, FL

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Bob Foster, Washington, D.C.
1. **Dick Tiger,** Biafra
2. **Mark Tessman,** Houston, TX
3. **Ray Anderson,** Akron, OH
4. **Yvan Prebeg,** Yugoslavia
5. **Jimmy Dupree,** Jersey City, NJ
6. **Bob Dunlop,** Australia
7. **Eddie Avoth,** Wales
8. **Hal Carroll,** Syracuse, NY
9. **Andy Kendall,** Portland, OR
10. **Gregorio Peralta,** Argentina

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Nino Benvenuti, Italy
1. **Luis Rodriguez,** Miami Beach, FL
2. **Freddie Little,** Las Vegas, NV
3. **Emile Griffith,** New York, NY
4. **Juan Carlos Duran,** Italy
5. **Don Fullmer,** West Jordan, UT
6. **Denny Moyer,** Portland, OR
7. **Fraser Scott,** Seattle, WA
8. **Stan Hayward,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Tom Bogs,** Denmark
10. **Doyle Baird,** Akron, OH

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Jose Napoles, Mexico
1. **Manuel Gonzalez,** Odessa, TX
2. **Hedgemon Lewis,** Detroit, MI
3. **Curtis Cokes,** Dallas, TX
4. **Percy Pugh,** New Orleans, LA
5. **Ernie Lopez,** Las Vegas, NV
6. **Raul Soriano,** Mexico
7. **Johann Orsolics,** Austria
8. **Miguel Barreto,** Puerto Rico
9. **Jerry Pellegrini,** New Orleans, LA
10. **Billy Backus,** Syracuse, NY

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Nicolino Loche, Argentina
1. **Bruno Arcari,** Italy
2. **Joao Henrique,** Brazil
3. **Adolph Pruitt,** St. Louis, MO
4. **German Gastelbondo,** Colombia
5. **Turk Kamaci,** Austria
6. **Eddie Perkins,** Chicago, IL
7. **Eugenio Espinoza,** Ecuador
8. **Barrera Corpas,** Spain
9. **Horacio Saldano,** Argentina
10. **Pedro Adigue,** Philippines

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Mando Ramos, Long Beach, CA
1. **Ismael Laguna,** Panama
2. **Pedro Carrasco,** Spain
3. **Ken Buchanan,** Scotland
4. **Jaguar Kakizawa,** Japan
5. **Arturo Lomeli,** Mexico
6. **Carlos (Teo) Cruz,** Dominican Republic
7. **Carlos Hernandez,** Venezuela
8. **Frankie Narvaez,** Puerto Rico
9. **Carlos Aro,** Argentina
10. **Chango Carmona,** Mexico

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Hiroshi Kobayashi, Japan
1. **Yoshiaki Numata,** Japan
2. **Alton Colter,** Phoenix, AZ
3. **Rene Barrientos,** Philippines
4. **Ruben Navarro,** Los Angeles, CA
5. **Antonio Amaya,** Panama
6. **Ricardo Lescano,** Argentina
7. **Carlos Canete,** Argentina
8. **Alfredo Marcano,** Venezuela
9. **Godfrey Stevens,** Chile
10. **Silvero Ortiz,** Mexico

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Johnny Famechon, Australia
1. **Shozo Saijyo,** Japan
2. **Vicente Saldivar,** Mexico
3. **Dwight Hawkins,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Cruz Marcano,** Venezuela
5. **Jose Legra,** Spain
6. **Fighting Harada,** Japan
7. **Felipe Torres,** Los Angeles, CA
8. **Jimmy Revie,** England
9. **Nobuo Chiba,** Japan
10. **Fernando Sotelo,** Mexico

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lionel Rose, Australia
1. **Ruben Olivares,** Mexico
2. **Chucho Castillo,** Mexico
3. **Alan Rudkin,** England
4. **Takao Sakurai,** Japan
5. **Salvatore Burruni,** Italy
6. **Rudy Alarcon,** Philippines
7. **Katsuyoshi Takayama,** Japan
8. **Kazuyoshi Kanazawa,** Japan
9. **Leo Calderon,** Mexico
10. **Julio Guerrero,** Mexico

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Alacran Efren Torres, Mexico
1. **Hiroyuki Ebihara,** Japan
2. **Berkrerk Chartvanchai,** Thailand
3. **Raton Mojica,** Nicaragua
4. **Chartchai Chionoi,** Thailand
5. **Bernabe Villacampo,** Philippines
6. **Fermin Gomez,** Mexico
7. **Susumu Hanagata,** Japan
8. **Octavio Gomez,** Mexico
9. **Jose Severino,** Brazil
10. **Erbito Salavarria,** Philippines

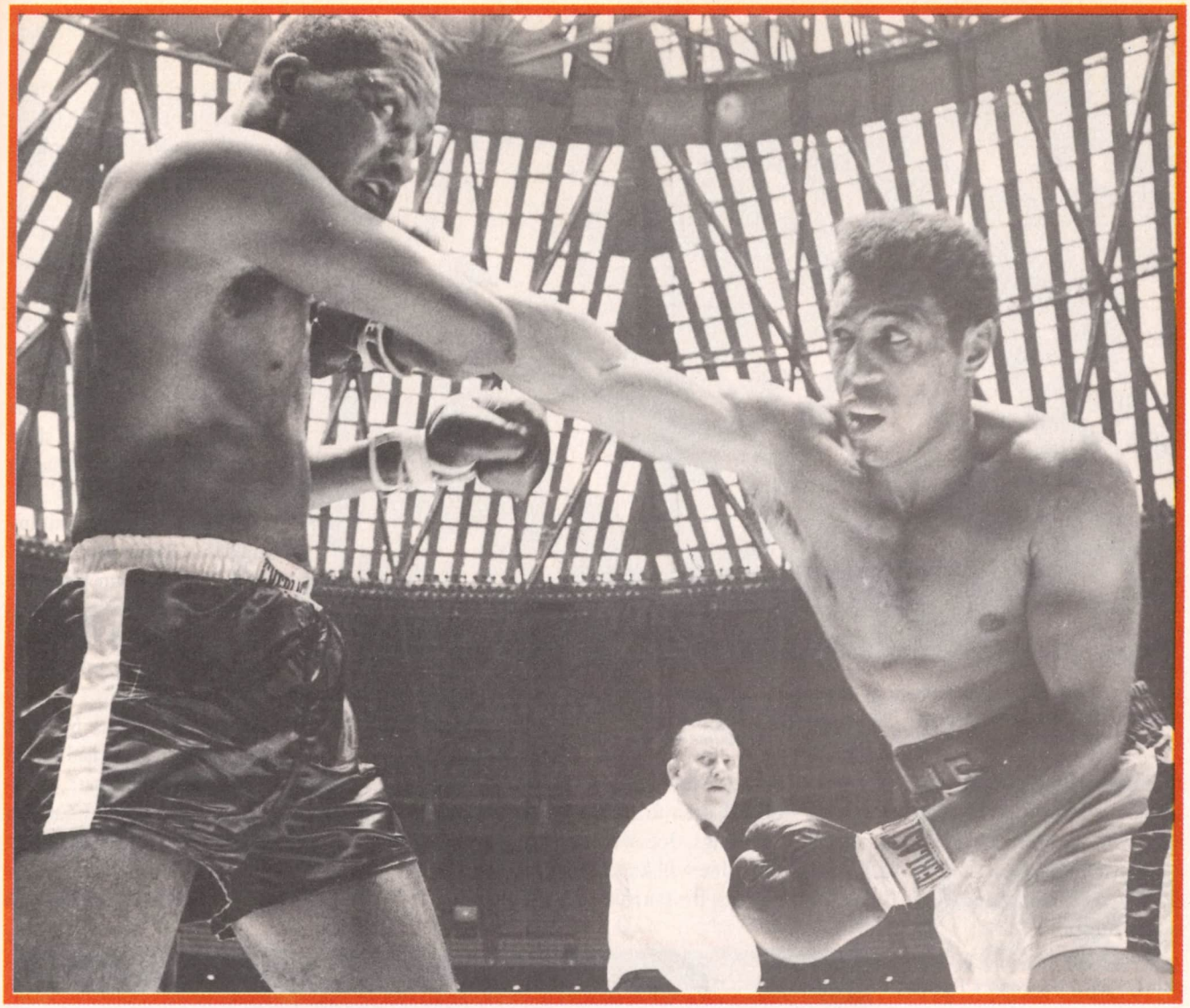
(Continued from page 88)

Quarry in seven rounds, after taking everything he had in the first three minutes, if you saw this fight in Madison Square Garden or on closed-circuit TV, you saw exactly how I would annihilate Ellis.

I don't know if you saw a quote from Joe Louis in the papers the day before I stopped Quarry—a game young man to whom I hated to do it. Louis said, "The Frazier-Ellis fight will be no contest. Joe will not give Jimmy room enough in which to work his jabs, and his bobbing and weaving."

There you have the situation as I face it—and Ellis faces it. I will crowd him. I will punch him. I will hurt him. I will take everything he has, and never let up. He is not a kayo hitter. Please note that I have scored 21 knockouts in 24 fights.

(Continued on page 92)



Ellis believed he was ready for Frazier because he'd passed tests against heavy-handed pressure fighters like Leotis Martin. Ellis was of the opinion that his defensive skills and technique were far superior to the Philadelphia slugger's.

(Continued from page 89)

because I'm going to be here for a while.

But after Quarry came back in the next round and the next round and kept repeating everything he did, well, then I saw Quarry was fighting a Frazier fight. If Quarry had gone on and backed away, like he should have, and counter-punched, and just let Frazier run into different shots, then I believe in the later rounds it would have told on Frazier. I say that because he tired badly when I saw him fight Oscar Bonavena. But Quarry went out there and stood toe to toe. Frazier didn't have to look for him. Jerry was just a sitting duck, because that's Frazier's type of training. He trains hard for five- or six-round fighters, and tries to cut them down, you know. So I thought Quarry fought a Frazier fight after the first round.

I can tell you now that Jimmy Ellis won't fight a Frazier fight. I do like for the man to come to me. That way I know I won't have to look for him. I know that when I'm dancing he's going to be trying to catch up with me, and I'm figuring on making him put a little wear on his legs.

If he stands still and doesn't try to come to me, then that's going to make it better for me to just bounce around and pick him off.

I have to use all the techniques I know to make the guy pull out of his style and come into the style I want to fight. This is the way every fight goes. Quarry didn't fight his own style. So that means Frazier wins.

When I fought Quarry, I made him fight my style and that's why I won. If I can pull a man into my style, then I have the man trapped. And if he pulls me into his style, then he's got me trapped. But I try to use my head at all times and not fall into the other man's trap.

I've fought men with styles similar to Frazier's. Bonavena is a burly-type fighter. And Leotis Martin was another guy who came and tried to throw a lot of gloves at me and put pressure on me. These guys tried to run me down. When I run into these kinds of guys, I know I'm going to have a pretty easy time because I don't have to look for them. I can do what I want to do. All I have to do is mind my p's and q's and outsmart them. This is the thing I believe is going to help me with Joe Frazier.

Frazier's defense, I think is mostly

(Continued on page 93)

Frazier felt his seven-round stoppage of rugged Jerry Quarry was a good indication of what he would do against Ellis. After withstanding a furious assault by Quarry in the opening three minutes, Frazier responded by breaking Quarry down over the next six frames, demolishing him with power.

(Continued from page 90)

The only boxers who have lasted the limit with me were Bonavena, twice, 10 rounds in New York and 15 in Philadelphia; and George Johnson, 10 rounds, in Los Angeles.

Bonavena is awkward, ungainly, hardly a smart fighter. But he is one of the strongest, stamina-loaded scrappers the ring has seen in many years. He has been beaten by Zora Folley, by Jose Giorgetti on a disqualification, by Ellis, and twice by me.

I refer you to the Ellis fight for Jimmy at his best and Bonavena at his mental worst, as he worked off the ropes. The Ellis of the eliminations will not beat me. The Ellis of the tournament cannot stop me, and he would have to hang a kayo on me to win.

I will demolish Jimmy as a contender with power, with stamina, with know-how. I just have to revive the Quarry script.

Yank Durham, my trainer, and I agree on every point of stand pressure. I give him three rounds.

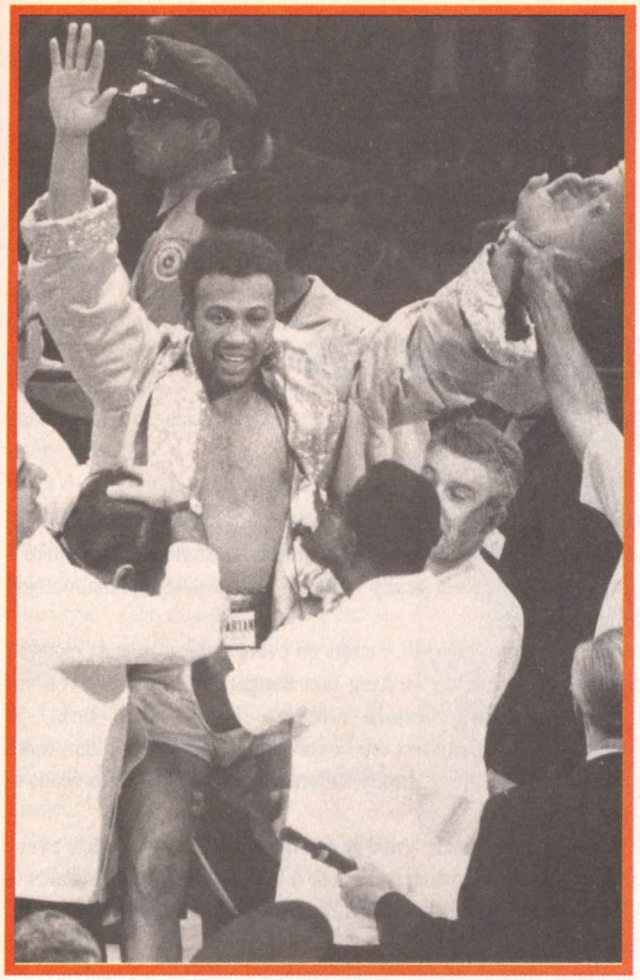
"Joe won't give him a chance to run. He'll try to run, but he won't have room. He's a stuffed middleweight.

"Why has a bout with Ellis not been held to this point? A date was offered by Madison Square Garden for March 4. The Garden offered 37.5 percent to Ellis, 27.5 to Joe, a guarantee of $250,000 to Ellis and $205,000 to Frazier. Joe took it, even with the short end. Angelo Dundee turned it down for Ellis.

"When we were training for Dave Zyglewicz we received a telegram from the Astrodome in Houston saying Ellis had accepted terms for a fight with Frazier at the Astrodome. We answered we had accepted terms with Madison Square Garden and had signed a contract for a fight with Ellis there.

"We will prove to Ellis and Cassius Clay that Joe Frazier is the authentic champion. Ellis will be a tuneup for Clay. We hope he settles his problem." ■

Ellis thought he'd throw an early challenge at Frazier, after "Smokin' Joe" ripped through Quarry. Ellis talked so much, that Frazier thought about taking on Ellis right then and there.



Ellis considered himself the heavyweight champ after beating Quarry in '68. "It doesn't matter to me if six states and some foreign countries want to call Frazier the heavyweight champion. I know better," Ellis said.

(Continued from page 91)

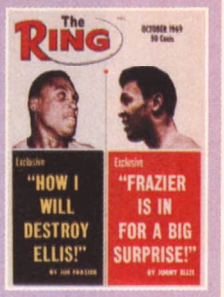
his offense. He just likes to throw a lot of leather. But it's no telling what he will do. Bonavena dug him around the body once, and Frazier complained to the referee about a low blow. Now, I don't know whether it was a low blow or not. But I do know that he complained about getting hit in the body. And I know I can hurt him with a jab. I think he got his jaw or something hurt against Oscar Bonavena.

This guy Joe is no iron man. He has been hurt, and he has been dumped. So I look to hurt him with good right hands. I look to hurt him with a jab. I figure if the jab is clicking and working good, well, it's going to swell him up. He's no steel man. I look to hurt him with a lot of things. And when it's over, I look to be heavyweight champion of the world—including those six states and some foreign countries.

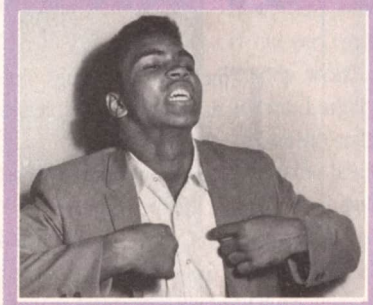
***

ADDENDUM: Everything Frazier said he would do against Ellis, he did. "Smokin' Joe" ripped through Ellis on February 16, 1970, in Madison Square Garden, winning by fifth-round stoppage. Two fights later, Frazier would step back into the ring at the Garden, beating Muhammad Ali in an epic confrontation. Ellis never fought for a major title again, though he did take on Ali in '71, only to lose a 12-round decision. ■

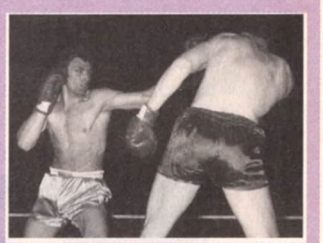
THE RING, October 1969



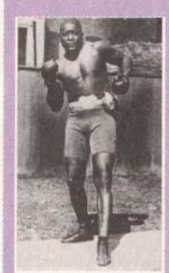
***The Cover*:** With Muhammad Ali stripped of the heavyweight title over his refusal to be drafted into the U.S. military, Joe Frazier and Jimmy Ellis were about to unify their two versions of the title that they'd picked up in Ali's absence. But before Frazier and Ellis got into the ring, they engaged in a little smack talk via the pages of THE RING.



***Ali's Jeopardy*:** By the time Joe Frazier and Jimmy Ellis would climb through the ropes, it looked like Muhammad Ali might be on his way to a Federal penitentiary for refusal to honor his draft commitment. THE RING was bucking the trend and continuing to recognize Ali as the world heavyweight champion (though still not recognizing his name change).



***Britain Backs Bugner*:** At 19, Joe Bugner was making a name for himself in the heavyweight ranks by winning 18 of his first 19 fights. The 6'3", 220-pound Bugner came to England as a Hungarian refugee with his mother when he was a child. British fight fans began to feel Bugner had a chance to become the first British heavyweight champ since Bob Fitzsimmons.



***The Black Man And Boxing*:** Before there was Jackie Robinson, there were Jack Johnson (pictured) and Joe Louis. Boxing was the first sport that opened the door to interracial competition, giving African-Americans a chance to earn riches they couldn't get elsewhere. In a historical piece, THE RING looked at everyone from Tom Molineaux to Joe Frazier.

***Fighter Of The Month*:** Vicente Salvidar earned the honors after coming back from almost two years in retirement. Salvidar showed no signs of ring rust as he dispatched Jose Legra in winning a 10-round unanimous decision. Salvidar was looking next at a fight with world featherweight champ Johnny Famechon.

THE FIGHT DOCTOR

WHOSE BRAIN IS IT ANYWAY?

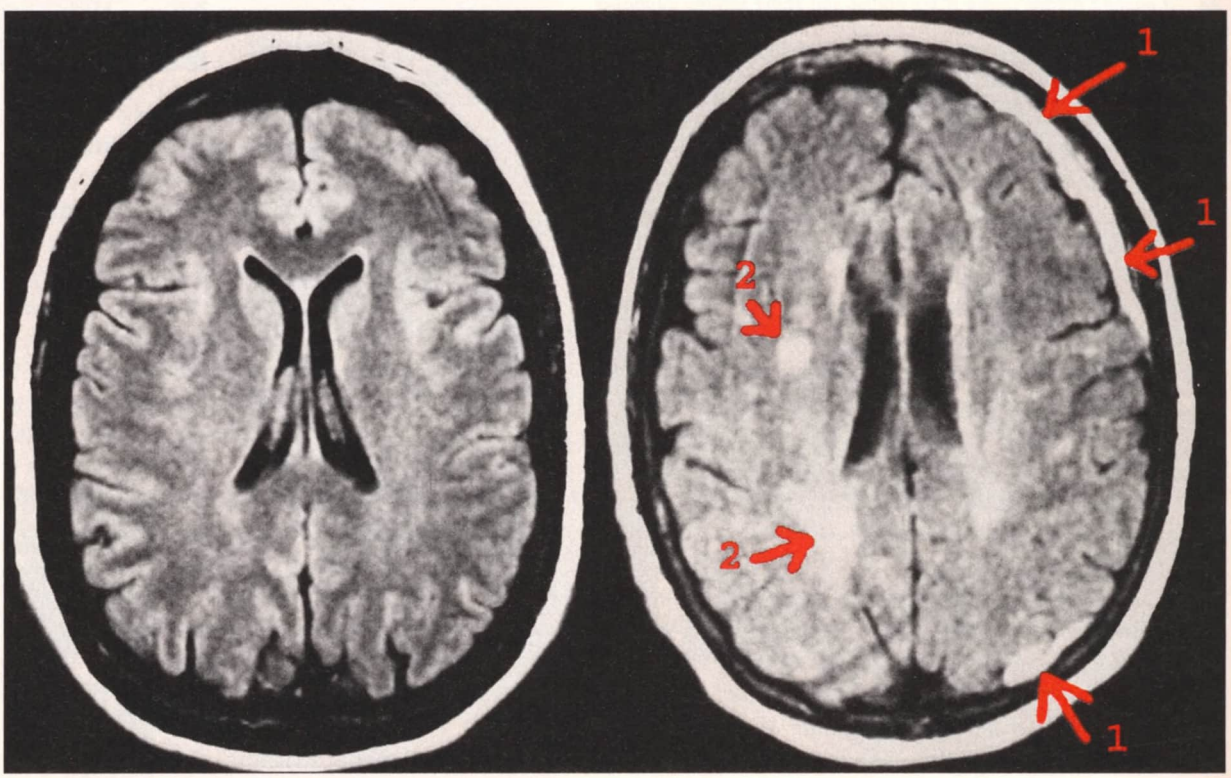
By Margaret Goodman, MD

There are few things promoters, managers, and commissions agree upon, except the lack of standardization in medical testing of fighters. Each commission is different. Some merely require a physical and a warm body, while others request yearly Hepatitis/HIV testing, ophthalmologic testing, neurological exams, and MRI scans.

While seeking approval to do baseline one-time MRI/MRA scans on every fighter, Nevada received extensive criticism and few kudos. One camp said, "Boxing is a dangerous sport. All you are doing is ruining the clubfights and making certain athletes ineligible to box." A well-known matchmaker was quoted as saying, "Only test the boxers turning pro. The older, more experienced fighters close to the end of their career have already suffered brain damage. Who needs to know about them?"

Others understood our intention to protect each and every fighter. After all, isn't every fighter entitled to know he or she is medically fit before stepping into a boxing ring? No one wants to make boxing cost-prohibitive. But who could argue that a healthy brain isn't the most important prerequisite to this professional pursuit?

So what is the best way to determination if a boxer's brain if healthy enough for him or her to compete?



The MRI on the left is normal, while the one on the right is not. The white areas in the abnormal scan, both along the outer edge and on the inside, are known as UBOs (Unidentified Bright Objects) and represent areas of bleeding or damage.

Among the most useful tools is a brain MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), which uses a magnetic field and radio wave energy to see inside the brain. Another is a CAT scan or CT (short for Computerized Tomography), which uses X-ray to see inside the brain using a computer. MRI and CT images appear like slices from a loaf of bread. Then there is MRA (Magnetic Resonance Angiography), which enables you to see where blood is flowing. It can detect blocked flow as well as abnormalities within the arteries such as an aneurysm (balloon-like change).

Every professional and amateur fighter should undergo an MRI/MRA at the start of his or her career. This will ensure the boxer has no life-threatening conditions (such as an aneurysm) that would put him or her at increased risk. It will also identify the size of the brain, which can undergo changes over time. Followup MRI scans would be indicated as needed, depending on a fighter's history of multiple knockouts or a decline in performance.

CTs are readily available in all hospitals and are the test of choice immediately following a knockout or tough fight. Twenty-four hours later, an MRI, which is more detailed than a CT, will better identify microscopic areas of trauma.

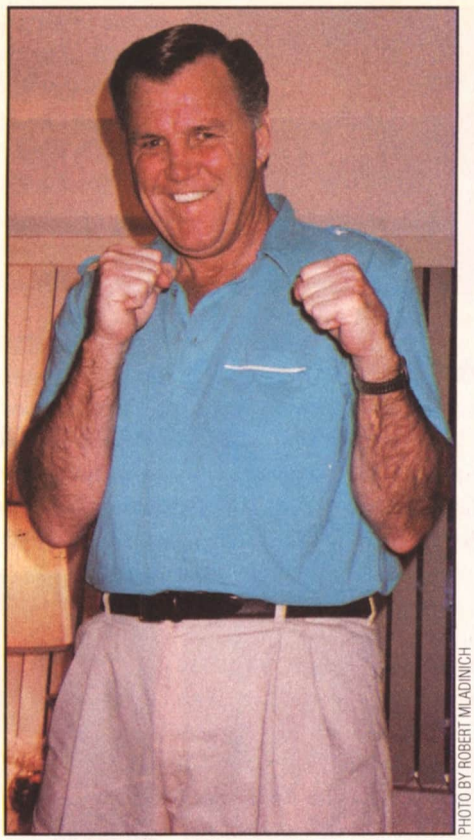


PHOTO BY ROBERT MLADINICH

Like many fighters, heavyweight Jerry Quarry, who suffered brain damage in the ring, probably incurred a number of injuries during his career that weren't immediately diagnosed, leading to more serious problems later in life.

Brain shrinkage (cerebral atrophy) occurs naturally at a slow rate in all of us. It signifies loss of brain cells and can be accelerated by punches to the head. According to Dr. Dean Easton, a well-respected Diagnostic Radiologist at Valley Hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada, "Some brain atrophy is often seen on CT or MRI by the time a person begins their 50s or 60s. However, it can occur earlier due to alcohol, poor nutrition, or trauma."

Dr. Easton goes on to say that a baseline scan showing the size of the brain at the start of boxer's career in comparison to one a few years later can be used to determine if his or her brain is shrinking excessively. He cautions that this must be used in context with the fighter's performance and neurology exam.

One of the things doctors look for are UBOs (unidentified bright objects), tiny white spots seen on a brain MRI. They represent microscopic areas of bleeding or damage. It may show where there is no longer any blood flow. A few such spots can be normal in a 55-year-old, but even a few are unusual in your 30s. Too many UBOs over time can make your brain look like Swiss cheese and indicate progressive brain damage. Classic MRI findings compatible with trauma are called "shear injury" and refer to numerous UBOs in a pattern signifying where the brain has been tugged or pulled. As a result, nerve cells are damaged, and connections are lost. This affects a person's concentration, memory, and reflexes.

The MRI scans that accompany this column (opposite page) show one normal healthy brain, and one with a small subdural hematoma (blood clot on the brain's surface).

The human brain is enclosed in the bony skull. Beneath the skull, a leathery covering called the dura further protects the brain and provides nourishment. Small bridging veins connect the brain to the dura. When torn, these veins bleed and produce the clot called a sub-dural.

On the abnormal MRI, white areas within the brain tissue represent areas of bruising or lack of blood flow. Tiny subdurals can reabsorb. However, more trauma to this already weakened area is still dangerous. Larger clots produce pressure on the brain and begin a process where the brain swells as the cells explode. If poorly recognized and untreated, this is deadly.

Autopsies of boxers frequently show multiple areas of bleeding of different ages, indicating the fighter was re-injured over time. Typical symptoms of a brain blood clot, including headache, dizziness, confusion, and memory loss, are serious and require immediate medical attention.

Lately, more and more examples have come to light of boxers having suffered blood clots and still wanting to fight. According to Dr. Neil Martin, Chief of Neurosurgery at UCLA, "Although medical studies are limited on boxers, the proof is right in front of you. If a fighter bled once in his brain, he has proved he is susceptible and can bleed again. You don't need years of research to prove it. The risks are too high to keep fighting."

As of February 2004 and over an eight-month period, the Nevada State Athletic Commission (NSAC) has completed more than 400 MRI/MRA studies on boxers. Of these 400 studies, 30 were abnormal, but only two of those resulted in permanent retirement. One-third of the abnormal scans required followup to insure the boxers were not developing further brain damage over time. (Please contact the NSAC for more detailed information).

If done in numbers, an MRI/MRA can be quite affordable. In Nevada, a boxer can obtain both studies for $425. Sure, it sounds like a lot if you are just starting out. However, what better insurance could you invest in as a boxer?

Will any test ever make boxing completely safe? Of course not. Boxing will always be a dangerous sport. But why not reduce the risks, save lives, and improve the chances of fighters having a successful retirement? ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

LEWIS' LEGACY

Now that Lennox Lewis has retired, where and how does he rate among boxing's best heavyweight champions? For pure excitement, Lewis must surely be one of the sport's most boring champions, especially when compared to the likes of Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, George Foreman, etc. But it stands to reason that as a chess enthusiast, he fought as much with his brain as with his heart.

On the positive side, however, Lewis has the distinction of beating every single opponent he faced, something that not even the great Joe Louis, Ali, or George Foreman could claim.

In short, while Lennox Lewis may not quite belong at the very top with phenomenal champions like Ali and Louis, he can certainly hold his own on the next level, with the likes of Larry Holmes, Foreman (who incidentally rates Lewis above everyone including himself), Evander Holyfield, and Joe Frazier. Yet Lewis has never been taken seriously in the U.S. Perhaps, if he had been an American, the U.S. public and media would have given him his rightful due, as a truly worthy champion.

PATRICK TREE
Montreal, Quebec

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

As reader Patrick Tree points out, Lennox Lewis defeated every fighter he ever faced as a pro, including Mike Tyson (pictured). Certainly, that fact should help his historical standing, as very few heavyweight champions of the past could make the same claim.

A LEAGUE OF OUR OWN

My father and I sat down and thought up the International Boxing League (IBL), whose aim would be to organize and enhancing boxing's image and the sport itself. The NBA, NFL, and MLB are all prototypes of successfully organized, popular sports. The problem is that boxing has been around much longer than any of those sports, and has yet to receive admission into the promised land of the rich and glamorous mainstream.

Boxing fans and analysts constantly ask, "Why doesn't boxing have a mainstream star?" The answer is obvious: Boxing lacks a mainstream star because there is no organized league to represent it. Would Shaquille O'Neal, Kevin Garnett, Derek Jeter, or Alex Rodriguez be the superstars they are today if it weren't for the organizations that market and produce them? The answer is no. Several fighters, including Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson, and Oscar De La Hoya, came close, but all three lacked a foundation capable of producing a superstar.

The IBL is realistic and it can be a reality, but not without the support of you, the fans. Let this generation be the one to succeed and finally make boxing the mainstream sport it deserves to be.

ANDREW EISENMAN
Bexley, OH

OSCAR'S GREATEST CHALLENGE

I'm amazed that Oscar De La Hoya has agreed to box Bernard Hopkins at middleweight. De La Hoya is a brave and obviously confident boxer to take on a task as demanding as this. However, I do

not feel that Oscar is big enough or fresh enough to be able to rise to the occasion. Sure, he was a very good super featherweight, an outstanding lightweight, and a great welterweight. But as a junior middleweight, he has only proven to be just above average. How he intends to rise once again in weight and take on a champion still in his prime and a proven all-time great is beyond me. I certainly wish Oscar the best of luck in his middleweight clash, but my prediction is that Bernard is going to walk De La Hoya down and stop him around round 10.

MICHAEL HILLS
Barrow-in-Furness, England

NEW ROLE FOR GATTI?

I think the producers of *The Sopranos* should offer Arturo Gatti a role in the show. Gatti is the most exciting fighter in the world. He lives in northern New Jersey, he's Italian, and he has charisma.

PAUL M. SOTACK
Buffalo, NY

FILLING THE VACANCY

Due to rumors that the Vitali Klitschko-Corrie Sanders fight will be for the vacant RING championship, I would like to address two points.

First, your policy states that in some situations, a fight between the number-one and number-three fighter can be for the vacant title. One might argue that such a case should only occur if there is a compelling reason, such as the unwillingness or inability of the number-two contender to participate. Chris Byrd is desperate for heavyweight opponents, and due to the history between he and Vitali, why should the Sanders fight be approved when no negotiations have even been opened with the ready and willing number-two contender?

Secondly, since the fight with Wladimir Klitschko took place on March 8, 2003, Corrie Sanders will officially have been inactive for one year a full month before his fight with Vitali. Therefore, by your own ranking policy, he should lose his number-three ranking one month before the fight. It seems that you are more concerned with filling the vacant spot left by Lennox Lewis than with the validity of your own championship system.

JOSHUA SPEAKS
speaksjd@yahoo.com

[Editor's note: We will indeed recognize the winner of the Klitschko-Sanders fight, which is set to take place right around the time this magazine hits the newsstands. Your concerns are understandable, but here is our counter-reasoning: First, our decision on whether a vacancy can be filled without the number-two contender involved comes down to a judgment call on how strong a claim that number-two contender has to a title shot. Based on Byrd's performance against Fres Oquendo in his last fight, any claim that there cannot be a title fight without Byrd would be weak. And second, while Sanders will have been inactive for more than a year by the time he fights Klitschko, our policy has long been to leave fighters in the rankings if they have a fight scheduled when they hit the one-year inactivity mark.]

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/HBO

Arturo Walnuts? Reader Paul M. Sotack suggests Arturo Gatti would make a great Sopranos cast member—and in fact, Gatti's manager, Pat Lynch, told THE RING several years ago that he might try to get Gatti a role on the popular HBO show after his boxing career is over.

SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Patrick Myler on his piece about Rinty Monaghan in the April 2004 issue ("'40s Flyweight Champion Rinty Monaghan: Win Or Lose, He Left Irish Eyes Smiling"). Although I was not alive to see Rinty fight, he is still considered a legend in this part of the world. I would also like to thank Mr. Myler for highlighting just how much of a fighting town Belfast was and still is. Keep up the good work.

MICHAEL McCONNELL
Belfast, Northern Ireland

I consider myself a die-hard boxing fan/reader and enjoy picking up a publication and reading a great article about the Sweet Science. *ESPN The Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated* do the sport no justice. But I have read some of Johnnie Whitehead's work in THE RING and its sister boxing publications, and I definitely believe he is on the money. Whitehead writes about facts and does not sugarcoat things or fish for gossip. Most recently, I read his article in the April 2004 issue of THE RING about Roy Jones and Antonio Tarver ("Triumph Without Victory"). It was a very well-written article that went beyond who won, etc., which I was tired of reading about.

TOM RYDER
tryder@us.imshealth.com ■

LOOKING AHEAD

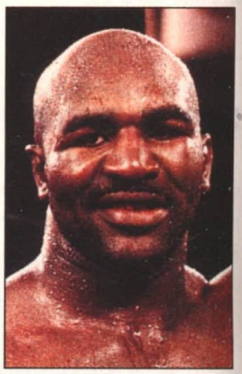
By Eric Raskin

NEW TEAM, SAME HOLYFIELD

He's 41 years old. He hasn't won a fight since June 2002, hasn't scored a knockout since 1997, and is 2-4-2 in his last eight fights. The man who's been his lead trainer for almost a decade refuses to work with him anymore. And he's ranked no higher than 12th by any of the alphabet groups, making his dream of again becoming the undisputed heavyweight champion that much more unrealistic.

And yet, as **Evander Holyfield** told the world in early-March, he's fighting on—because, for whatever reason, "quit" is the dirtiest four-letter word he knows.

"I'm the person that I am because the fact is that I never got anything on the first try or the second try or the third try," Holyfield said. "I just don't quit. And because I don't quit, I eventually get what I want."



Holyfield: Won't run up the white flag

Don Turner doesn't see it that way, and after throwing in the towel to end Holyfield's October '03 fight with **James Toney**, he threw in the towel on working with "The Real Deal." So Holyfield is moving on without him and, and as of press time, was still looking for a new trainer.

"I would like to have confidence in somebody who believes I can win," Holyfield said. "If you don't think I can win, then there ain't no sense in being on the team."

Those who are on the team include **James Gould**, **Alex Krys**, and **Frederic Meyerson**, the three partners in the Avondale Management Group. Holyfield's longtime adviser, **Jim Thomas**, is still a part of Team Holyfield, according to the fighter, but Thomas will cede much of his power in charting Holyfield's fight schedule and directing his business interests to the Avondale partners.

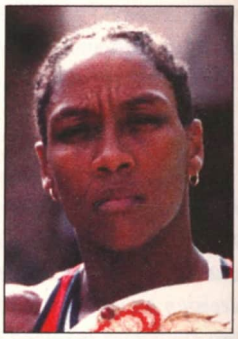
What's next for Holyfield in uncertain. He hopes to fight in the summer, but had no opponents lined up as of press time. As far past his peak as he appears to be, and with his drawing power nose-diving (at least based on the disappointing pay-per-view numbers for the Toney fight), there's probably only one marketable fight out there for Holyfield right now. Conveniently, that's just the fight he's been talking about.

"**Mike Tyson** will make me fight good anytime I fight him because I know what his capabilities are," Holyfield said. "If all I needed to do was have a Mike Tyson switch that I could turn on, I'd fight great each and every time."

Unfortunately, medical technology hasn't caught up with Holyfield's dreams yet. And as such, we're not holding our breath expecting him to "fight great" ever again.

But it doesn't matter what we think; this Holy War is continuing on regardless.

LISTEN UP



Wolfe: Tall order against 6'5" Ward

Having turned down a fight with **Floyd Mayweather** at 140 pounds, **Juan Lazcano** appears set instead to meet **Jose Luis Castillo** for what will be the vacant world 135-pound title if Mayweather has indeed left the division by then. The bout looks likely to come off on the undercard of the June 5 PPV doubleheader featuring **Oscar De La Hoya** vs. **Felix Sturm** and **Bernard Hopkins** vs. **Robert Allen** ... Just before we went to press, featherweight champ **Manny Pacquiao's** defense against number-one contender **Juan Manuel Marquez** was finalized for May 8 on HBO ... Also on May 8, an intriguing women's fight is scheduled in Biloxi, Mississippi, between **Vonda Ward** and **Ann Wolfe**. Ward typically fights in the neighborhood of 190 pounds, while Wolfe usually weighs around 160, so they'll meet in the middle at a catchweight of 175. The winner becomes the ideal next challenger for **Laila Ali** ... It looks like **Joe Calzaghe's** light heavyweight debut, against beltholder **Glencoffe Johnson**, will happen in June, possibly on Showtime ... Also in June, Showtime regular **Acelino Freitas** is probably headed back to HBO, where he fought once before, against **Lemuel Nelson** in 2000. Possible opponents for "Popo" include **Nate Campbell** and **Phillip Ndou** ... Showtime's main event for May 1 doesn't feature the biggest names in boxing, but it should be highly entertaining nevertheless when cruiserweight warriors **Ezra Sellers** and **Kelvin Davis** collide. ■

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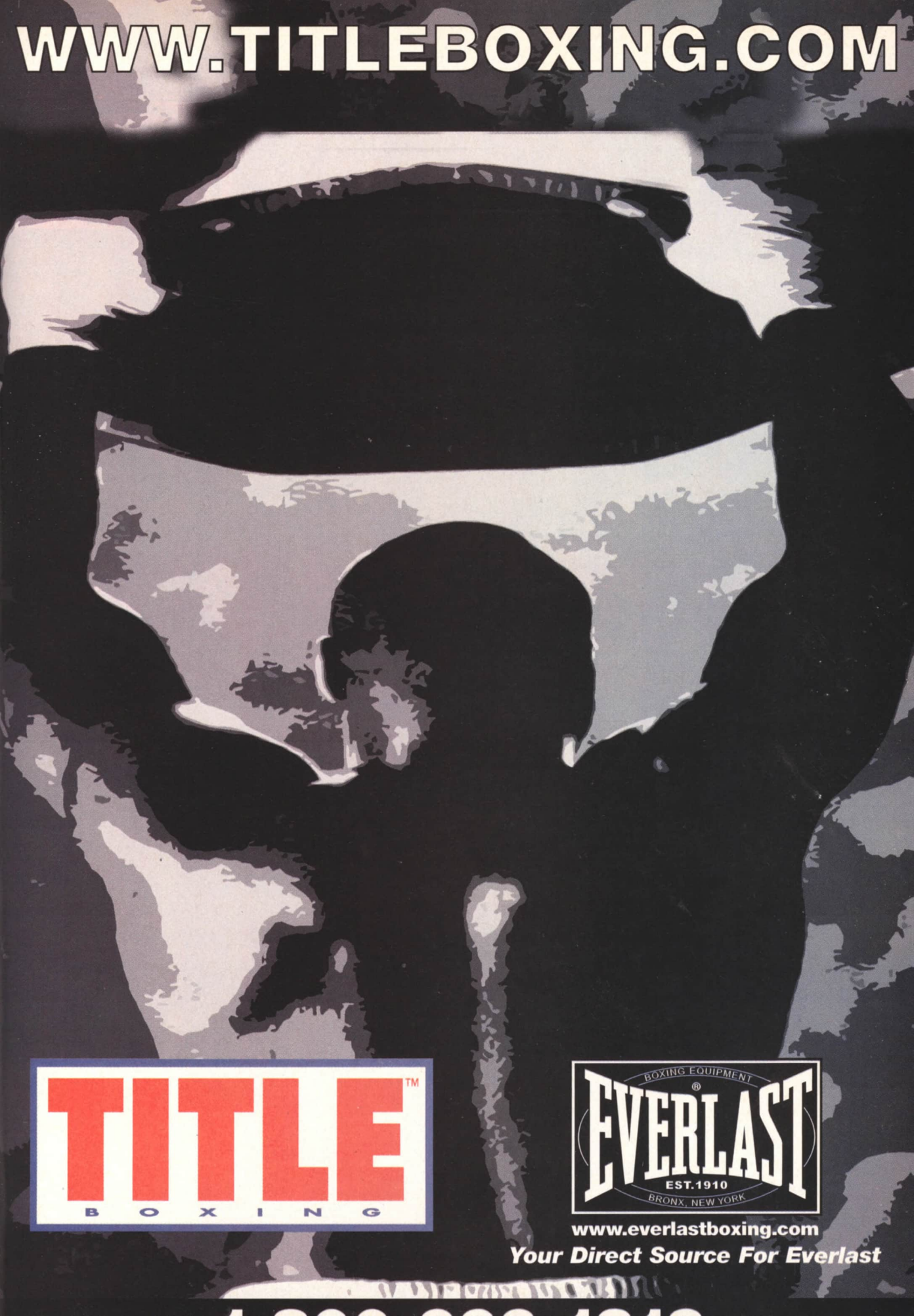

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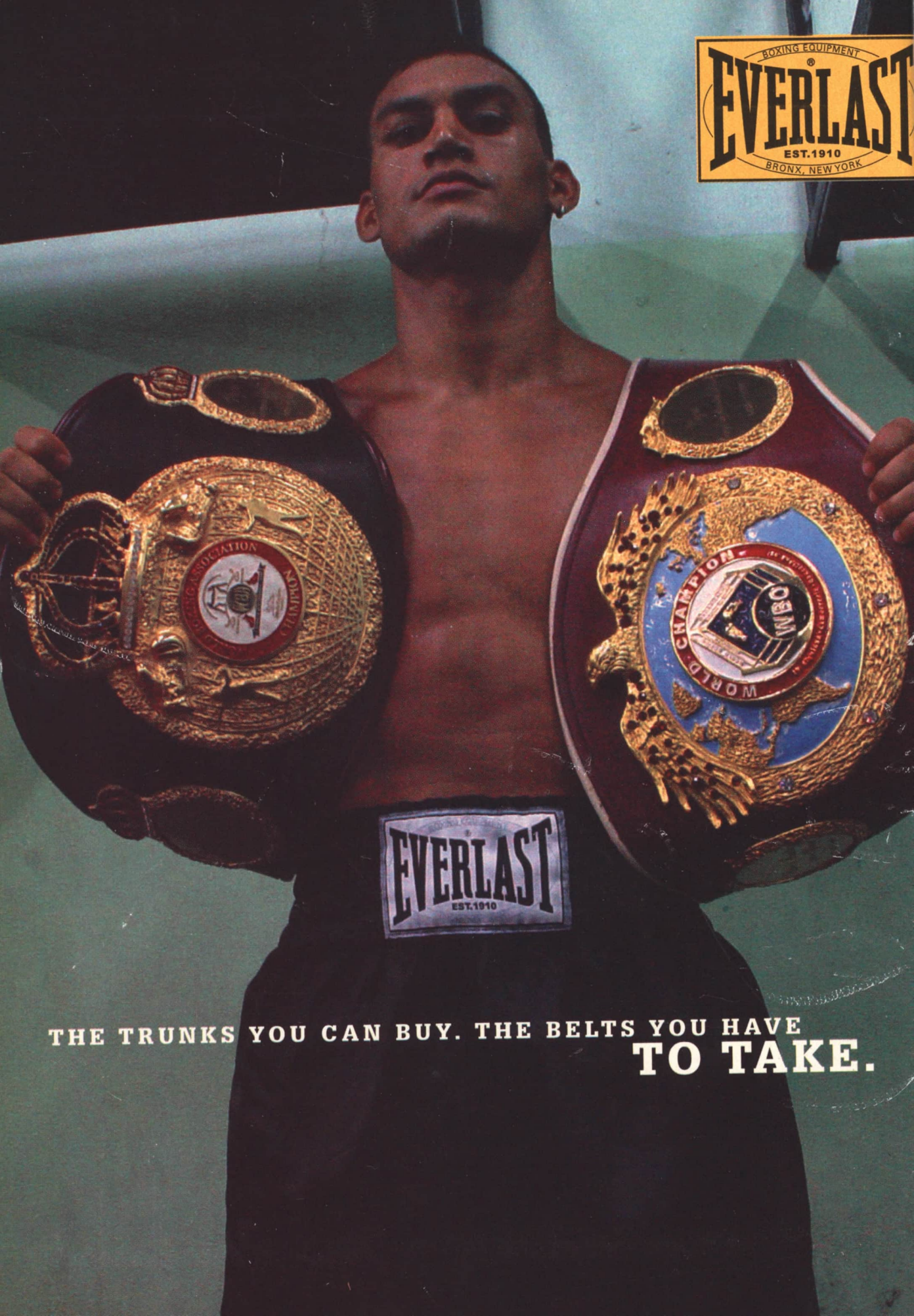
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